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# SMACKDOWN

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- Facing Undertaker
- Playing the Market
- ...And More!

DECEMBER 2004

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# CALENDAR

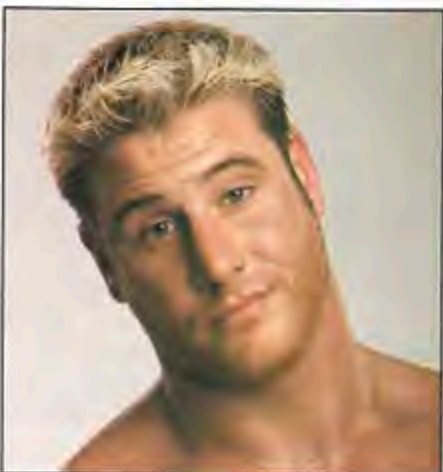
Live Events & Superstars' Birthdays

# 2004

DECEMBER

			1	2	3	4
						Worcester, MA 7:30 p.m.
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
New York, NY 2:00 p.m.	Johnson City, TN 7:00 p.m.	Greenville, SC SmackDown! 7:30 p.m.		KURT ANGLE		REY MYSTERIO
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Atlanta, GA Armageddon 7:45 p.m.		Nashville, TN SmackDown! 7:45 p.m.	RENÉ DUPRÉE			ROB VAN DAM
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
	Lafayette, LA 7:00 p.m.	New Orleans, LA SmackDown! 7:30 p.m.	Albuquerque, NM 7:30 p.m.	San Antonio, TX 7:30 p.m.		

\* All event dates and times subject to change.



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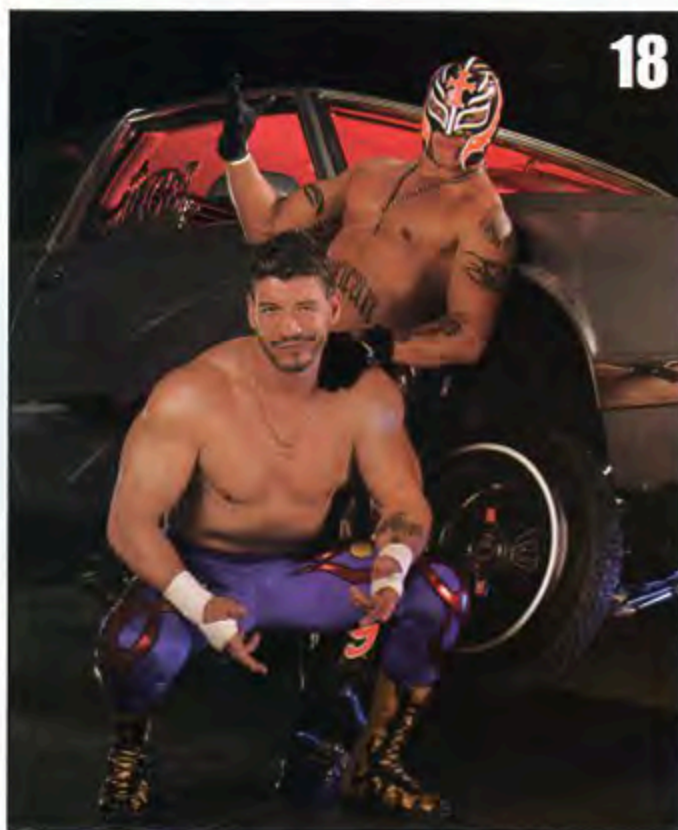
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ECW was a phenomenon like no other. Relive some of its greatest moments with the Superstars who were there! Plus, the brains behind ECW, Paul Heyman, speaks out on his creation.

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It's WWE's second-longest pay-per-view tradition. Survivor Series has a long and amazing history. Join us as we look back on some of its major highlights.



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# LETTERS

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Write us at: *SmackDown! Magazine*, c/o Managing Editor, P.O. Box 3859, Stamford, CT 06905

## Luther Hits Home

Dear Editor,  
I felt the Luther Reigns article in the September issue of *SmackDown! Magazine* was a great read. I knew that Luther seemed a bit rough around the edges, but I had no idea of his troubled past. It just shows what you can do in life despite your hardships. With very few large rookies on *SmackDown!*, we can all expect big things from Luther in the future. Thanks again, the article was a classic.



Winters Covington  
New Orleans, LA

Dear Editor,  
I had a blast reading the article on Luther Reigns in the September issue. I didn't know he had such an interesting life, and that article taught me a lot about him. I think that it would be a good idea if you did some more stories on the big, bad bodyguard. Try putting him on the front cover of the next issue if it's possible. Thanks again for the spectacular article.

Joel Elman  
Essex, England

## Polish Power Lives On

Dear Editor,  
I was very pleased with your article on Ivan Putski in October's edition of "24/7." Ivan Putski is a true legend. A suggestion: "24/7" articles on Bruno Sammartino and "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers. Keep up the fantastic work!

Travis Nuckles  
Via e-mail

[Editor's Note: Rest assured that Bruno is a lock to be featured in "24/7" down the road! As for Rogers, we've never covered a legend who's no longer with us, but if we would ever make an exception, it would be for the original "Nature Boy."]

## Simply Outrageous!

Dear Editor,  
I loved the article "WWE's Most Outrageous Superstars of All Time" in the October issue of *SmackDown! Magazine*. It was a terrific follow-up to the "Greatest Villains" story a few months earlier. Seeing some of those outrageous Superstars from the past really brought back some funny childhood memories. *SmackDown! Magazine* con-

tinues to have great articles that ask for fan participation. Perhaps some future ideas could be "Greatest Upsets in WWE History" or "Most Shocking Moments in WWE History." I can think of a number of choices for both. Thanks again and keep up the great work. On a side note, would you please do a follow-up feature on the men who made your Outrageous Superstars Honorable Mention list? I would love to see the profiles of The Berserker, Xanta Klaus, Skinner, Big Bully Busick, Man Mountain Rock and Nailz. Maybe include their profiles when you reveal the winner in the Holiday 2004 issue. I know many fans who would love to see it.

Todd Dilley  
Via e-mail

[Editor's Note: We at *SmackDown! Magazine* take pride in putting out a decidedly fan-friendly publication, Todd. As for the Honorable Mention stuff, who knows? If we get enough positive feedback to the first Outrageous Superstars story, you may see more in the future!]

## SmackDown! Magazine Is King

Dear Editor,  
I just bought the new October 2004 issue of *SmackDown! Magazine* and I must say: what a masterpiece! It was the best issue I have ever bought. This is the kind of magazine I have been craving for many years. Everything was just perfect. From "Rico's Runway" making fun of some of my favorite WWE Superstars, to "WWE's Most Outrageous Superstars of All Time," in which I got to see photos of many of my favorite WWE Superstars. Again, thank you very much. In the future, it would be great if you featured the 10 Most Popular WWE Heavyweight Champions of All Time. I would like to see Ultimate Warrior on that list. And also seeing the 20 Most Popular Divas of All Time would be great. I would like to see Miss Elizabeth and Sensational Queen Sherri on that list.

Amir Khalilian  
Vancouver, B.C., Canada

## Those Damn Dudleys

Dear Editor,  
Thank you for the article about the Dudley Boyz in the September issue of *SmackDown! Magazine*. The Dudley Boyz have always been my favorite tag team, and since they have returned to their old ways, I like them even more. The Dudley Boyz are definitely the best tag team in WWE, and they deserve a WWE Tag Team title shot. Dudleys rule!

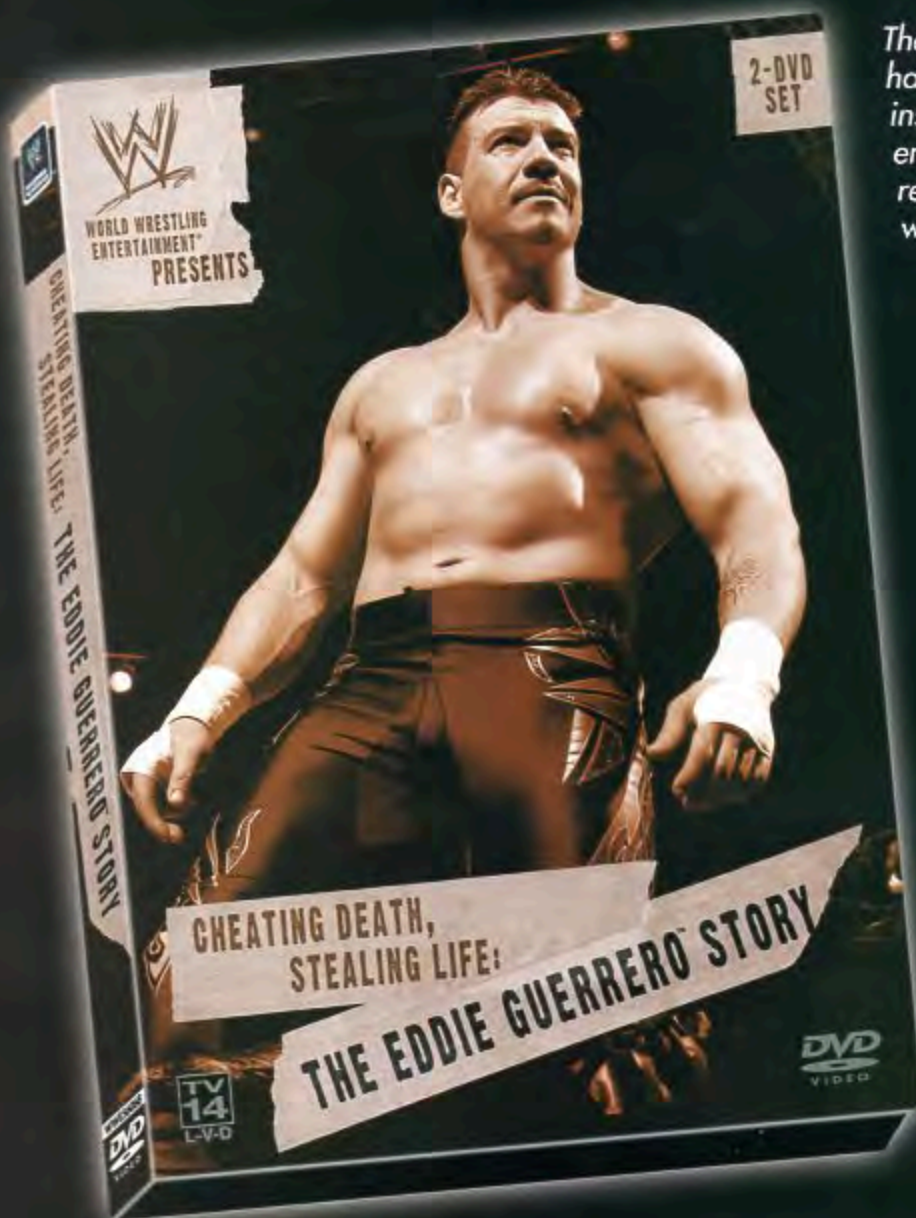
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# Get Ready, Here Comes Mr. Jordan

**Orlando Jordan might** just be the smartest man in sports-entertainment.

In short order, this former boxer and student of Rocky Johnson has transformed himself from just another competitor on the *SmackDown!* roster into one of the brand's true power brokers. On the surface, it may look like Jordan has demeaned himself by entering the employ of John "Bradshaw" Layfield, but the way I see it, there isn't a shrewder man in that locker room right now.

Where was Jordan just prior to being JBL's "Chief of Staff"? I'll give you a minute... Still don't have an answer? Well, you're not the only one. That's because Jordan was floundering. A highly talented athlete, no doubt, but in a company where highly talented athletes are the norm, sometimes it takes just a little bit more. Sometimes you have to seize the moment and take the ball and run with it, to compound two clichés.

That's exactly what Orlando Jordan did the night of August 5, in Houston's Toyota Center. That was the *SmackDown!* in which he stormed the ring and saved WWE Champion JBL from a fierce beatdown at the hands of Undertaker.

Why did he do it? He certainly didn't have to. The two men had no prior public relationship. If anything, it was Undertaker who had been formerly associated with Jordan, briefly taking him under his wing

when he first debuted last year.

But as far as the cold and calculating Jordan was concerned, the past was the past. It didn't matter if Undertaker had briefly been Jordan's mentor. On this night, he stood in the way of his climb to the top.

There was a very simple reason why Orlando saved JBL that night. He knew JBL would be grateful, because if there's anything that people in power love, it's lackeys. Jordan saw an opportunity, and grabbed it. Suddenly, all the attention was on him. JBL had to react; he had to

he wanted. Now he has a purpose. Now he has clout. And, most importantly, now he has exposure. It isn't easy to get TV time when you've got a locker room of Superstars the likes of which *SmackDown!* has. But there's one thing you can guarantee: Hitch your wagon to the WWE Champion, and there's no avoiding the cameras. Whenever JBL's smug mug is seen on TV, there's Jordan, right by his side.

The change in him has been astonishing. Since he joined JBL, he has blossomed. He now projects an aura of self-confidence and assuredness that is the hallmark of future greatness.

History has shown just what a prudent course of action this is. After all, it was as Shawn Michaels' bodyguard that Diesel first got noticed. "Rowdy" Roddy Piper's first role in WWE was as the manager of "Cowboy" Bob Orton. Before his Evolution days, Batista acted as D-Von Dudley's enforcer. Clearly, great things should be on the horizon for Mr. Jordan.

Yet, it's a very precarious line that Jordan walks right now. He must absorb all he can from JBL, but not allow himself to get stuck in his current position indefinitely. He must not grow complacent, but rather recognize when the time has come to move on to the next step. Otherwise, he will squander all that he has accomplished thus far. Once the time comes, he must put JBL behind him, whether that happens amicably or violently.

Jordan must never lose sight of the fact that in the end, by helping JBL, he is helping himself. He must never forget the words of Booker T. Washington, who said,

"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else." ■



respond in some way to the man who had saved him from the wrath of his archenemy. So he chose to reward the act. Richly.

When you see Orlando Jordan at JBL's side, it's clear to see he got exactly what



You, the readers, have the chance to pick the brains of the *SmackDown!* Superstars on any subject you like!

Mail your questions to: *SmackDown! Magazine* • c/o World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc. • 1241 E. Main Street • Stamford, CT 06902

Or e-mail your questions to: [sdmag@wwe.com](mailto:sdmag@wwe.com) • With the subject line: "Ask the Superstars"

### Joshua Gremaux asks:

## How has being a WWE Superstar changed your life?

• **It put me** on the other side of the TV set. I remember being a fan when I was a kid, and wanting to get into it. Not only has it given me confidence and proved to me that I can reach my goals, but I also like to think that I stand for all the other people who have dreams. They can live vicariously through me, while sitting back in their living rooms. And I think that's really cool. — **Rob Van Dam**

• **The first thing** that comes to mind is that I had to accept the responsibility that was given to me when I wasn't very responsible. I learned that if you're not responsible, everything gets taken away from you. I had to grow up. That's how becoming a WWE Superstar changed my life. — **Eddie Guerrero**

• **I can afford** to pay all my bills, and I've got a nice car. — **Akio**

• **It's let me** live the dream. To quote Nick McKay, "It's been fantastic. I get to do what I want to do, and they kick me money for it." Ain't no better gig than that. — **John Cena**

• **It has changed** everything. I'm lucky, I'm happy, and now I have everything. — **Funaki**

• **I get girls now**, and I know it may sound cheesy, but in many ways, it's forced me to grow up and learn some of life's lessons. I'm now able to support myself better. I've become more independent and I have more confidence in myself. It's helped me grow into a man, taught me about responsibility and being an adult—although at the same time, I keep my childish ways. — **Paul London**

• **Wrestling is** what I've always wanted to do, and I've never referred to myself as a Superstar. But being in WWE hasn't changed me a bit, because this is what I've always thought I would end up doing. — **JBL**

• **It hasn't changed my life**, and I don't look at myself as a Superstar; I'm an athlete. This is something I set out to do since I was 6 years old, and I just feel obligated to do it. — **Orlando Jordan**

• **Well, No. 1**, I'm never home now. And two, I get to meet a lot of awesome fans from around the world. I'm doing what I

love to do, and what I've always wanted to do, and that's to entertain. So my life feels pretty fulfilled. — **Torrie Wilson**

• **I get to be** a leader now. I'm one of the most experienced guys in the locker room, and I'm teaching the new guys coming up. It's really a lot of fun helping them. — **Billy Gunn**

• **It's a dream** come true, basically. — **René Duprée**

• **It changed my life** in many ways, and it helped me to grow up a lot faster than I wanted to. Being on the road, the experiences that we face each and every day—you have to be alert.

You have to be smart, too, because there are a lot of times when things don't go your way, or people try to take advantage of you. Here in this business, you must learn quickly how to survive. Also, just being in the company has changed me in terms of taking care of my family. I had three jobs before I made it in this business. Even when I was in ECW, it was rough for a bit. But coming here and going through everything I went through just makes me appreciate the hard times even better now that the good times have finally come around. It has made me the person that I am today. People tell me that I don't yell or get upset, and that's because I'm very happy. I thank God every day that I'm here. Through Him, I feel that I've survived in this business as long as I have, and in every way, shape or form, this business has helped tremendously in my upbringing. It's kept me out of trouble, and it's definitely influenced my life. — **D-Von Dudley**

• **It took me** from being just part of one of the greatest wrestling families in the world, to being an actual wrestler in one of the greatest wrestling families. I always grew up watching my family wrestle, and wanting to do it myself, and now that I'm a WWE Superstar, I'm actually part of that. When you think of the Guerrero family, you think of wrestlers, and now I'm a big part of that. — **Chavo Guerrero**





## The Long Road Back

*"I've been in critical condition, serious condition, and then stable condition, but now, I've been upgraded to fabulous condition."*

— Rico

I'd like to start off this month's column by saying how *grrrrrrreat* it feels to be back. I truly appreciate all of the lovely fan mail and flowers I received during my recovery. I always knew I had millions of fans, but I never imagined they'd be so loyal.

When you see a Superstar on your TV each and every week, they tend to occupy a place in your heart. In a way, it's almost like you are letting us into your home to hang out. So when a Superstar goes down with a serious injury, the visits stop, and fans have no idea of the drama and dedication it takes for us to return to action.

In June, I tore my hamstring in three different places, and after that frightful night, I simply stopped appearing on *SmackDown!* Nobody felt the brutal

plane ride I had to endure (from Chicago to Las Vegas), the time I spent in the local hospital, or the excruciating rehabilitation I put myself through. All those moments were untelevised, unplanned, unstylish and unbelievable.

My stay at a local Sin City infirmary was simply atrocious. At one point, it got so bad that I actually decided to leave prematurely. The nurses were unattractive, boorish, and so unaccommodating that I actually feared for my life, and figured that an escape was definitely a worthwhile risk. So I ripped out my IV's, wrapped my torn appendage with an Ace bandage, draped myself in a hideous hospital blanket, and literally crawled out at 1:30 in the morning. Dripping with blood, sweat and tears, I began making my way home, but was so weary that I lost my wits and made a wrong turn. Fortunately, some of Vegas' finest picked me up, and escorted me to my plush domicile.

A few weeks later, I began physical therapy. At first, my left leg was so tight and inflamed that I couldn't even make one full rotation on an exercise bike, and could only walk with the aid of a cane. Through extensive stretching and manual therapy, the stylish staff at Keith



Kleven's rehab center made sure that my healing scar tissue remained pliable, because had it not, I would have lost mobility, meaning I no longer would be able to use my high-leg martial arts kicks.

After rehabilitating four hours a day, five days a week, I found myself working out in the ring just eight weeks after my injury. Doctors had initially told me it would take six months to get back. My leg is now 100 percent, my body feels great, and, believe it or not, I'm fresher, hungrier, and more energetic than I've been in quite some time. Through strict dieting and training six days a week, I've managed to lose a few pounds while gaining more stamina. I've eaten so much canned tuna that I'm beginning to grow gills, but it's all worthwhile. The new, streamlined Rico is set to make an impact.

I know I told you all I was coming back 17 times better, but I lied—I've actually returned 18 times better! ■

[Editor's note: The opinions found in this column are those of Rico, and not necessarily the opinions of WWE or *SmackDown!* Magazine.]





**T**he complete, behind-the-scenes story of one of the industry's most influential promotions is chronicled in this hotly anticipated two-disc set.

## An Extreme DVD Review

By Anthony Call

**Pull out the barbed wire** and pile up the tables, because the very best of Extreme Championship Wrestling is finally coming to DVD.

Although it never became the biggest or most successful organization in the industry, ECW was a unique, groundbreaking product with a cult-like following. Filled with hardcore, hard-working competitors, ECW carved quite a niche in the wrestling world. The bond formed was so strong that many WWE fans still chant its initials at arenas across the country. Now, almost four years after its final bell, WWE is paying homage to the extreme organization with a special-edition, two-disc DVD set.

The first disc of this collection features a three-hour special, chronicling the complete history of ECW. From its simple roots as Eastern Champion Wrestling, to the day Shane Douglas threw the NWA World title down on the ground, renounced it, and declared the company extreme, to the final show, in which the fans said goodbye, this well-produced documentary covers all of the bases. Practically every WWE Superstar who ever worked for the Philadelphia-based promotion gives viewers his or her uncut, candid opinions on the good and bad of ECW.

For fans who truly loved ECW, this documentary will evoke a lot of emotions

and memories, and for anyone who never had the opportunity to attend an ECW show or witness it on TV, the documentary will provide a thorough history lesson on how ECW rose to become the third-largest wrestling promotion in the U.S., competing with both WWE and WCW.

With extensive comments from former ECW owner Paul Heyman, you'll learn all of the inside stories. The DVD chronicles how the promotion came about; how it was operated behind the scenes; the truth behind the 1997 ECW invasion of WWE; the story of a backstage mole who helped WCW

made ECW great, like the bitter rivalry between the Sandman and Raven that ultimately led to the Sandman's "crucifixion"; the peculiar pairing of Cactus Jack & Mikey Whipwreck; Terry Funk's inspirational ECW title win at the group's first pay-per-view, *Barely Legal*; the night Stone Cold Steve Austin walked into ECW and broke all the rules; and the surreal show in which a WWE Superstar defeated a WCW Superstar for the ECW title.

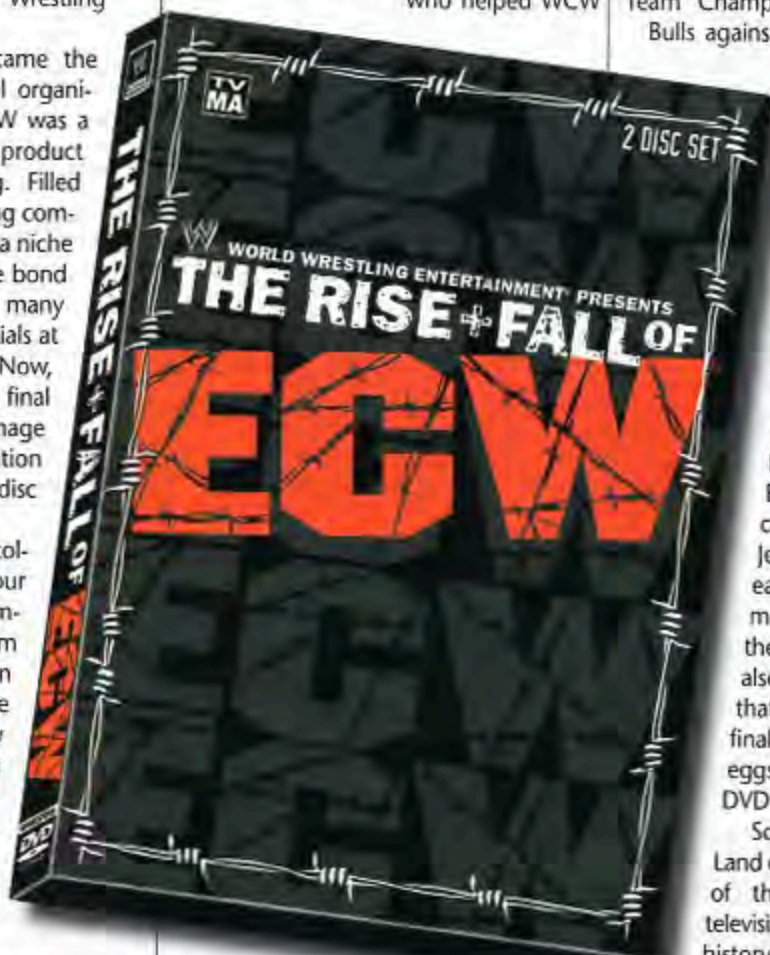
Aside from the in-depth feature, the DVDs also include full-length bonus matches, including a two-out-of-three falls Dog Collar Match for the ECW Tag Team Championship featuring the Pit Bulls against Stevie Richards & Raven,

a high-flying two-out-of-three falls match between Rey Mysterio and Psicosis, an insane Ladder Match between Whipwreck and Sandman for the ECW Heavyweight Championship, and a TV title match between 2 Cold Scorpio and Sabu.

For true DVD enthusiasts, the Tommy Dreamer-Raven grudge match, Bam Bam Bigelow-Tazz TV title contest and Rob Van Dam-Jerry Lynn high-risk classic each include optional commentaries featuring one of the competitors. There are also several bonus interviews that didn't make the feature's final cut, as well as four Easter eggs, hidden throughout the DVD's interactive menus.

So take an excursion to the Land of Extreme, and revisit some of the most groundbreaking television in sports-entertainment history with *The Rise and Fall of ECW*—an extreme DVD for the extreme fan. ■

[Check out [WWEShop.com](http://WWEShop.com) for more information on how you can order your copy of *The Rise and Fall of ECW*, as well as all the other great WWE titles.]



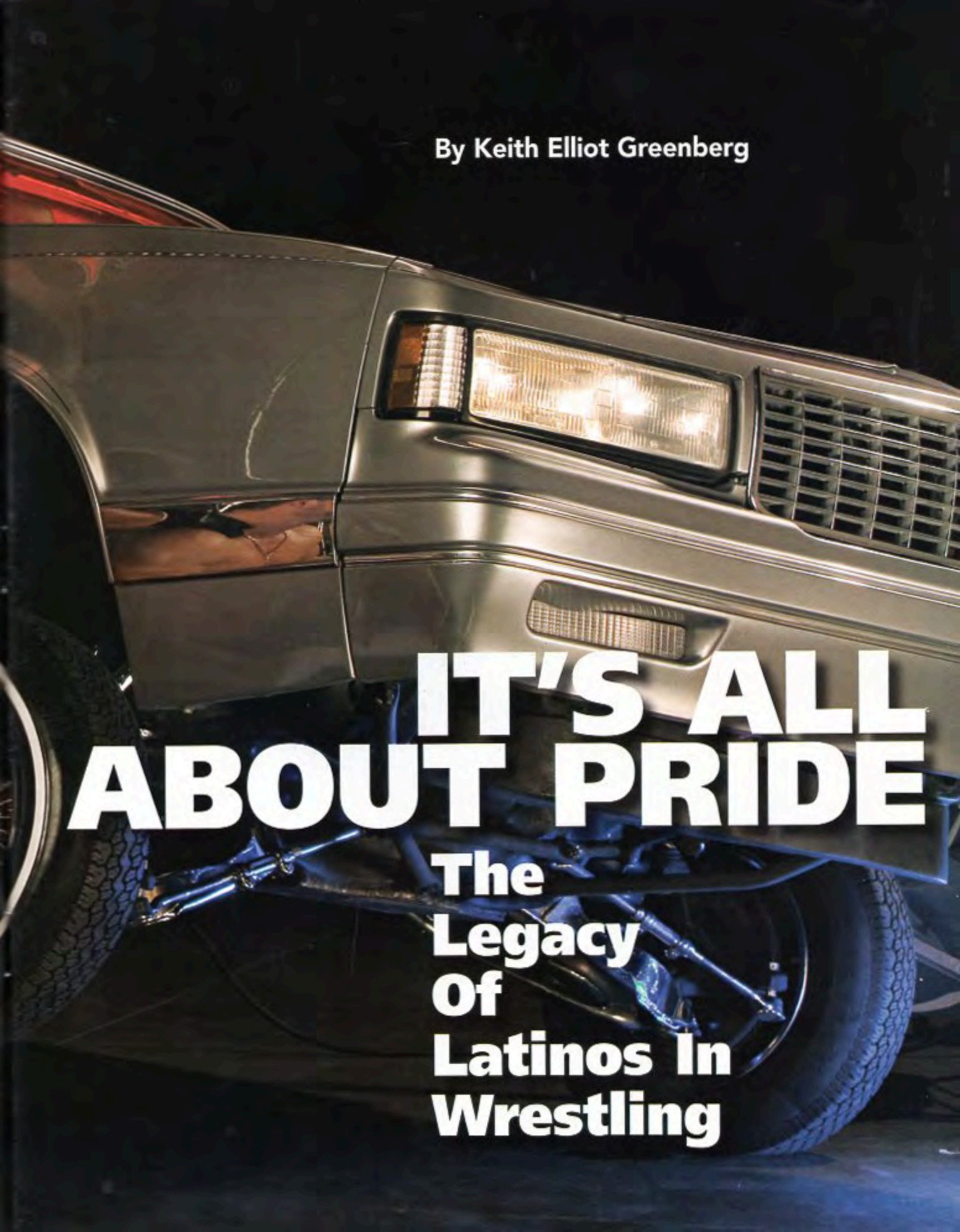
raid ECW's talent; as well as a deal that, if properly executed, might have saved ECW and made it a viable contender to this day.

*The Rise and Fall of ECW* takes a look back on all of the stars and moments that









By Keith Elliot Greenberg

# IT'S ALL ABOUT PRIDE

The  
Legacy  
Of  
Latinos In  
Wrestling



**When Carlito Caribbean Cool makes** another brash boast, Chavo Guerrero traps a foe in the "Gory Special," Rey Mysterio delivers his 619, and Eddie Guerrero overwhelms a victim with "Latino Heat," they link themselves to a proud past and a glorious future. Every one of these athletes has deep family ties to the sport of kings. But their connection is even more profound. As Latino-Americans, each carries the mantle of a group of performers who've overcome scorn and adversity to inject a permanent blend of salsa into an industry they ardently love.

The blood they've splashed on canvases from Chiapas to Newfoundland can never be washed away. Their lightning-fast maneuvers will be duplicated and refined for generations. And their

fervor for the mat wars both intimidates and inspires.

These are the Latinos of sports-entertainment. And their history, in many ways, is the history of the industry itself.

While Hispanics have always played a role in the sport, much of the Mexican *lucha libre*—or "free struggle"—tradition can be traced back to 1933, when promoter Salvador Lutteroth began running shows in Mexico City. In time, his organization would present as many as 10 separate shows a day.

Certain elements of *lucha libre*—hurricanranas, topes (pronounced "toe-pays") through the ropes, and planchas from the ring cables onto the arena floor—can be found in today's WWE. Others have remained

south of the border. In Mexico, for instance, competitors tend to apply headlocks while standing to the left of their opponents. In the United States, competitors usually stand to the right. In six-man tag matches in *lucha libre*, teams consist of a captain and two partners. Victory can be attained when either the captain is defeated, or two members of one team are eliminated. There are two referees in these matches, and, occasionally, two pins are counted simultaneously.

Regardless of the disparity in stipulations, the top stars of *lucha libre* have often traveled across the border, altering their styles to accommodate American crowds.

Of these legends, no one was probably as big as El Santo.





Like Rey Mysterio today, El Santo proudly wore his mask not only in the ring, but in public. In Mexico, the mask is a symbol of honor, and the concept of unmasking in the ring is akin to losing one's dignity. It's a notion rooted in the beliefs of the Inca people who co-mingled with the Spaniards after the country was colonized, and something every Mexican wrestling fan takes seriously.

For 40 years, from 1942 to 1982, El Santo (The Saint)—aka *El Enmascarado de Plata* ("The Man of the Silver Mask")—proudly covered his face while becoming a cross-over celebrity. In some 50 films, El Santo always played himself, a hero battling monsters, martians and gangsters—to the point that his in-ring and on-screen personas were indistinguishable.

In today's WWE, El Santo would most likely shine in the cruiserweight division. In his day, he dominated other men his size, holding prestigious middleweight, welterweight and light-heavyweight titles.

One of El Santo's regular opponents was the great Salvador "Gory" Guerrero, father of Eddie and grandfather of Chavo, Jr. Although his parents hailed from Zacatecas, Mexico, Gory was actually born in Arizona, and personified the Chicano spirit. Like his offspring—besides Eddie, Gory's sons Hector, Mando and Chavo, Sr. (aka "Chavo Classic") also wrestled—he was technically astute, but equally dangerous at brawling. He perfected the Gory Special, a type of hanging backbreaker, as well as the Camel Clutch. In 1954, Guerrero nearly defeated Lou Thesz to become National Wrestling Alliance (NWA) heavyweight champion.

Guerrero's series of bloodbaths with Cavernario Galindo set new standards for brutality. The rivalry was so heated that Gory even agreed to join forces with El Santo as *la Pareja Atomica* ("The Atomic Pair"), to take on Galindo and Black Shadow.

As he aged, Guerrero became a promoter in the border cities of El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico. But he remained active, and won his last title, the NWA America's Tag Team championship, in Los Angeles in 1976, teaming with his son, Chavo, Sr. They toppled the tan-



Pedro Morales proudly held the WWE Championship from 1971 to 1973, and was inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame in 1996.

dem of Senor X and Karl Von Brauner, only to lose a day later to Basque powerhouse Crusher Verdu and a young Rowdy Roddy Piper.

Others grapplers who were able to thrive on both sides of the border included El Canek, another masked sensation, and Jose "El Gran" Lothario, whose San Antonio training facility eventually produced Shawn Michaels.

Because of style differences, language barriers and overt prejudice, there was

resistance to Latino wrestlers in many parts of North America. But, in time, their dedication and skill turned around cynics, and just about every regional territory welcomed Hispanic stars, like Alberto and Enrique Torres, who held tag team gold in Georgia in the 1960s.

In northeastern arenas where Vincent J. McMahon—father of current WWE chairman Vincent K. McMahon—promoted, Latinos were part of the audience, as well as the main events. Antonino





Rocca, an Italian from Argentina, was the premier attraction in New York in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with his fiery, young partner, Miguel Perez. Perez represented the aspirations of his fellow Puerto Ricans in the city. Handsome and charismatic, Perez was so popular that there were several chapters of his fan club in the five boroughs. In fact, it was through the Miguel Perez Fan Club that Pedro Morales became active in pro wrestling.

Morales was born on the tranquil island of Culebra, Puerto Rico, but made his way to New York as a teen. After meeting a journeyman wrestler from Argentina at a Miguel Perez Fan Club meeting, Morales started training for the business, and made his debut at age 16.

The legendary Mil Mascaras does what he did better than just about anyone.



In 1965, the World Wrestling Association was a major promotion, based in Los Angeles, when Morales won the organization's title from "Crazy" Luke Graham. He also later held the organization's tag team title with partners like Mark Lewin, Luis Hernandez, Ricky Romero and Victor Rivera, a promising competi-

tor who'd soon become a Morales ally in WWE.

But Pedro's greatest accomplishment was when he became the first Latino to win the WWE heavyweight championship, taking down the "Russian Bear" Ivan Koloff in 1971. The image of Morales pounding his chest to psyche



himself up instilled great pride in his fellow "Boricuas." Even after he lost the title to Stan "The Man" Stasiak in 1973, he continued to stockpile accomplishments.

In 1980, he and then-WWE champion Bob Backlund won the tag team titles from the Wild Samoans in a "super card" at New York's Shea Stadium. The same year, Morales snared his first Intercontinental championship, beating Ken Patera, and would go on to trade the prize back and forth with Don "The Magnificent" Muraco.

Latino names had always been common on WWE shows, but, during the Morales era, the numbers truly began to multiply. Manuel and Roberto Soto were fan favorites, along with Rivera, who'd turn on the audience several years later. Tomas Marin, Juan Caruso and Pancho Valdez wrestled on television weekly. Puerto Rico's El Olimpico generally appeared masked, but in New York, there were laws against athletes obscuring their faces. Thus, when he waged combat in Madison Square Garden, El Olimpico was forced to cut a circle out of his mask, revealing some of his features.

Even Lee Wong, an opening match performer billed from Hong Kong, was actually from Panama, a Spanish-speaker of Chinese ancestry.

In northern California, Pepper Gomez was one of the top draws, along with non-Latins like Ray Stevens, Pat Patterson and High Chief Peter Maivia. Further down the coast in Los Angeles, the Olympic Auditorium was drawing a predominantly Mexican crowd. Freddie Blassie was affectionately called "El Rubio de Oro" ("The Golden Blond") as he teamed with stars like Raul Mata and Ray Mendoza. Their rivals included Black Gordman and the Great Goliath. Both spoke Spanish and were from Mexico, but they didn't identify with their heritage.

"And in this corner," ring announcer Jimmy Lennon would begin, "hailing from Mexico..."

"No," they'd protest, "New Mexico," antagonizing the crowd.

Between 1968 and 1971, Mil Mascaras held the Los Angeles-based NWA America's

title four times. He was referred to as "the Man of 1,000 masks, and 1,000 holds." Mascaras regularly entered the ring in a mask that fans had never seen before. Sometimes, he'd pull it off to reveal a second one—a colorful flourish proudly mimicked by Rey Mysterio today.

Unlike other prominent Mexican performers, Mascaras had a bodybuilders' physique, something he capitalized on when he began his own movie career. In the tradition of El Santo, Mascaras appeared in dozens of Spanish-language adventure movies. Yet, his career never seemed to lag. He won championships in Japan and Guatemala, and regularly challenged Superstar Billy Graham after the jive-talking strongman won the

WWE heavyweight championship in 1977, and the no-mask ban was lifted in New York State.

At the time, the Mexican presence in the northeastern United States was still growing, and following on the heels of Morales, the Puerto Rican connection remained strong. Carlos Colon was among several who shuttled back and forth between WWE and Puerto Rico. To this day, Colon is a major celebrity on the island, through his ownership of the World Wrestling Council (WWC) and reigns as champion.

"The Unpredictable" Johnny Rodz would never win a major championship in WWE, but his consistency and fearlessness won respect from every oppo-



**Carlos Colon**—father of *SmackDown!* newcomer Carlito Caribbean Cool—is the most revered wrestler in the history of Puerto Rico.





nent. In some ways, Rodz became more influential after his retirement, training Tazz and D-Von Dudley, among others. Today, he's a highly regarded backstage visitor at WWE shows, and a WWE Hall of Famer.

Rodz' frequent tag-team partner, Jose Estrada, had a similar reputation, and the distinction of beating Tony Garea for the now-defunct WWE junior heavyweight title in 1978.

Several years later, the masked Invaders would make a vigorous but unsuccessful bid for the WWE tag team titles. And at the 1988 *Survivor Series*, the mysterious Conquistadores materialized out of nowhere to come within inches of winning their eight-team elimination match. But just as the buzz was beginning, the Spanish-speaking duo with the golden masks vanished.

In terms of consistency, few Superstars matched "El Matador" Tito Santana, a Mexican-American sensation who,

**Tito Santana (top) and Johnny Rodz (right) are WWE Hall of Famers who remained on the roster throughout the 1970s and '80s.**





Paying tribute to the Latino tradition, Scott Hall gained tremendous popularity in WWE as "The Bad Guy", Razor Ramon.

like Mascaras, always competed as a heavyweight. Santana was a two-time Intercontinental champion, defeating the Magnificent Muraco in 1984, and Greg "The Hammer" Valentine the next year, as well as a two-time tag team titlist, sharing the gold with Ivan Putski in 1979 and Rick Martel in 1987. He was also a *WrestleMania* mainstay during the first decade of the annual event.

By 1997, Latino influence in American culture had widened, and few Hispanic competitors were shy about flaunting their ancestry. Puerto Rico's Savio Vega first appeared in WWE when he jumped out of the stands to rescue Razor Ramon. After joining a unit called the Nation of Domination, he broke away and started Los Boricuas, a brash faction that reveled in their ethnicity. His partners included Jesus Castillo, as well as two other second-generation prospects: Miguel Perez, Jr. and Jose Estrada, Jr.

Yet, no one blended his passion for family with his zeal for the sport better than Eddie Guerrero, who battled personal demons, found religion, and tore open his soul to fans, cleansing it as they listened to his tales of substance abuse, self-doubt and, ultimately, triumph.

Because of his five-foot-eight-inch



frame, Eddie was told that he'd never get the opportunity to wrestle in WWE. As a result, he shifted his focus to Japan

and Mexico, where some believe he even outdid his father's achievements. In the U.S., Guerrero first exposed a wide cross-section of fans to "Latino Heat" in ECW, then moved on to WCW. In 2000, unhappy with the direction of the company, he walked out with fellow workhorses Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko and Perry Saturn.

Guerrero's talents were hard to contain, despite the fact that he'd undermined himself with destructive impulses. In February, 2004, after rebounding from rehab and repairing his family life, he stepped into the ring, clear-eyed and resolute, against massive Brock Lesnar. When Guerrero pinned the former NCAA champion to win the WWE Championship, it seemed as if the

Los Boricuas were led by Savio Vega (first from left), and also included Miguel Perez, Jr. (second), son of the '50s tag team great.







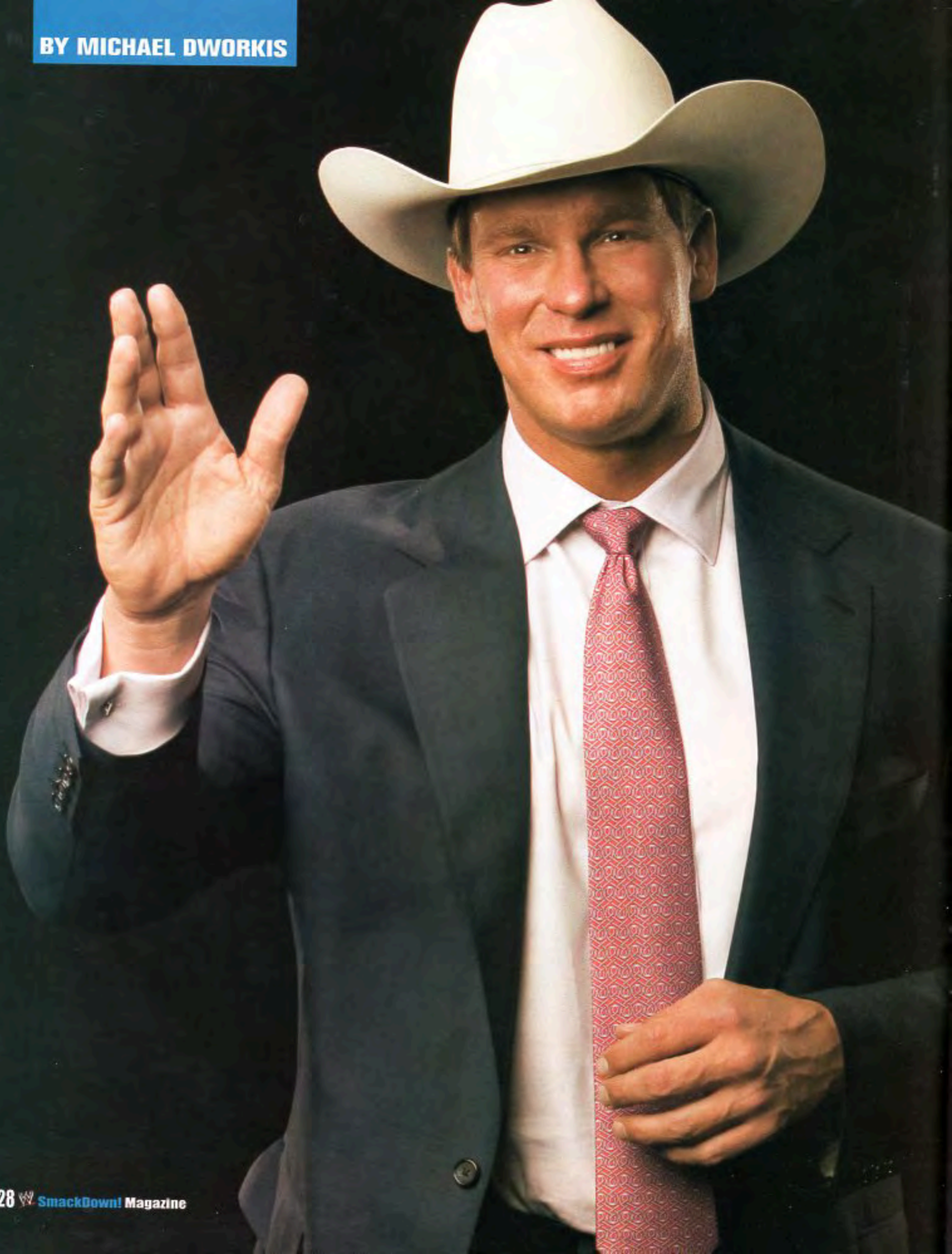
Today, *SmackDown!* features current Latino icon Rey Mysterio (above) and second-generation Superstar Carlito Caribbean Cool (left), the newest heir to the Latino legacy.

who'd preceded him were realized. Like those Hispanics denied access to places of privilege in the United States, Eddie had doubted whether he could make it in WWE. Now, he was not only in the building, but sitting on the throne.

Even after he lost the championship—via a controversial decision—to John “Bradshaw” Layfield, the impact of Guerrero’s feat could not be lessened. In 2004, Eddie, his nephew Chavo, Carlito Caribbean Cool and Rey Mysterio have come to symbolize Latino authority in the sport of kings. And whether the battleground is the ring or the corridors of power in WWE, the future will be articulated with a Spanish-flavored accent. ■



BY MICHAEL DWORKIS





# LAYFIELD ON THE HOT SEAT

## YOU POSED THE QUESTIONS, NOW JBL OFFERS UP HIS ANSWERS

**I**n the October edition of *SmackDown! Magazine*, we asked our fans to send in their inquiries to John "Bradshaw" Layfield regarding his career and how he became known as the "One-Man Conglomerate." Our mailboxes were flooded with numerous e-mails and letters requesting to know just about all there is to know about JBL's 10-year WWE career.

After poring through hundreds of questions, we were finally able to narrow it down to a selection representing the best and most frequently asked questions from JBL's followers. So now, we present to you, our loyal *SmackDown!* readers, the answers to the questions that you asked.

*How did it feel winning the WWE Championship? — Eric Dillon, Beltsville, MD*

**John "Bradshaw" Layfield:** It was the fulfillment of my lifelong dream. As a fan growing up, to be WWE Champion is what I dreamed of, ever since I started watching wrestling with my grandfather in first grade.

*Who is your biggest wrestling influence? — Myke Hess, via e-mail*

**JBL:** Bruiser Brody. I loved Brody growing up. In Texas, I got to see him, the Von Erichs







and the Funks. I got to compete against the Von Erichs, too, but I was never able to step in the ring with Brody. I had the fortune to face Stan Hansen, who was also one of my great influences.

*If you could face anybody, past or present, who would it be?* — Eric Darsie, Cambridge, MN

**JBL:** I never got to face Ric Flair. I would love to have that opportunity in the future.

*What made you start to follow the stock market?* — Mike Lobosi, Mexico

**JBL:** I was broke. I was playing football, but I ended up without any money after making some bad business decisions. I had something of an interest to begin with, and my father was the CEO of a bank, so that's where my interest really began.

*How do you find time to work on the stock market and make smart investment decisions when you are so busy traveling with WWE?* — Zachary and Alec Beresin, South Salem, NY

**JBL:** I travel a lot. I'm on planes several hours a day. That's when I do my reading. That's when I find all the time to work on my stocks.

*Where did you learn how to invest, and what advice would you give to regular people?* — Brad Hecht, Fair Lawn, NJ

**JBL:** You have to do tons of reading. I read several newspapers a day and a couple magazines every week. I work hard at it, and the advice I would give is that you have to spend a lot of time working on learning how to invest. A lot of people don't make the right decisions on invest-

ing, so it is important to take the time out to learn it properly and to understand how to invest properly.

*What was the worst injury of your professional career?* — Joey Norton, via e-mail

**JBL:** I tore my biceps muscle right off the bone. That was probably the worst. I was dropkicked and I got knocked out of the ring. I hooked the rope and when I fell, the biceps snapped off.

*In the late 1990s, you and Ron Simmons formed the APA and joined forces with Undertaker. If someone had told you then that some day you would be defending the WWE Championship against him, would you have believed it?* — Nick Camera, via e-mail

**JBL:** I don't know. Being the WWE Champion was always my goal. Being in a tag team makes it a bit harder to



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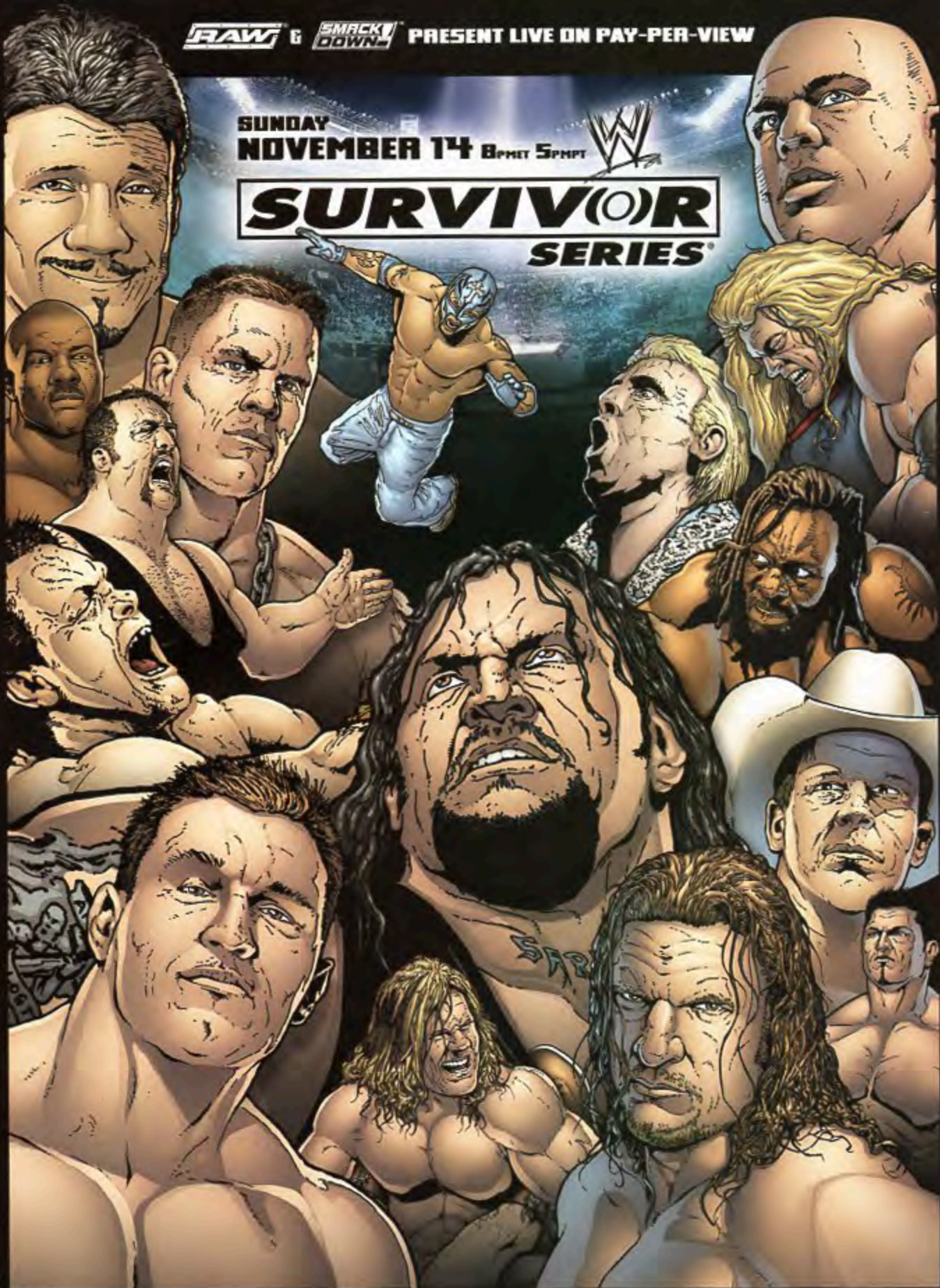
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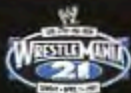


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## In Their Own Words

Compiled by Anthony Cali

In the 1990s, a phenomenon swept the sports-entertainment industry, Extreme Championship Wrestling, or as it's fans were fond of proclaiming with zealous fervor, "ECW! ECW! ECW!"

In an era when WWE and WCW were locked in combat for control of the industry, along came a little independent promotion from the south side of Philadelphia. From a bingo hall dubbed the ECW Arena, it would establish a cult following of astonishing proportions, run shows throughout the U.S., and eventually be seen on national cable and pay-per-view TV.

Not since the days when Vincent J. McMahon transformed the modest Capitol Wrestling Corporation out of Washington, D.C. into the World Wide Wrestling Federation—a territory spanning the entire Northeast—had an independent wrestling company grown to be such a force. Yet, at the start of 2001, it would all come crashing down under the weight of insurmountable debt.

The legacy and influence of the organization lives on. Nearly one-third of WWE's entire roster got their first major exposure there. In honor of the release of *The Rise and Fall of ECW* on DVD (see our review in this issue's "DVD Zone"), we sat down with these Superstars and asked them to share their memories of being a part of the Extreme Revolution.







All Photos courtesy of Pro Wrestling Illustrated.





#### **Rob Van Dam**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** My favorite moment would probably have to be the time in Buffalo, New York, when I dove out into the fifth row onto Bam Bam Bigelow. That was the night I won the Television Championship—a title I then defended on numerous pay-per-views. I held it for a total of 23 months, only to have to give it up after breaking my ankle, because I couldn't defend it anymore. Nobody could beat me, and I had some incredible hardcore matches during those two years [as champion].

**ECW's Legacy:** ECW was willing to go past the perimeters of abnormality. It was like the cuffs were off, and we were allowed to go the distance. It was up to us to do what we thought was appropriate to entertain the crowd, and that meant balls to the wall. We gave it our all, and the crowd knew it. They knew when they were getting something they couldn't get anywhere else, and they were just so happy to have us provide it for them. The crowd was definitely half of it.

#### **Spike Dudley**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** It had to be the first pay-per-view [*Barely Legal*]. I wasn't even involved—it was Sabu vs. Tazz—but it kind of just summed up what ECW was all about. The two had been at each other's throats for over a year and a half, without touching, and the payoff was this match, and I think it marked ECW's jump into the big time. They both just got into the ring, stood there, and stared at each other for like three minutes, while the crowd was on its feet going nuts. I was up top watching it with the live audience, and I just remember a feeling of electricity. At the time, it was the most awesome thing I'd ever experienced.

**ECW's Legacy:** The reason it became such an underground success was because of how much effort we put into it. It wasn't about money, it was about putting on the best show possible. At the time, we were trying to take stabs at corporate wrestling—WCW and WWE. Our attitude was, we're going out there and giving you everything we have, laying our guts out on the table for you, and if you like it, we'll keep doing it. And the crowd just ate it up, because they knew how hard we worked. ECW had such a relationship between the wrestlers and the fans, that it just became a cult classic. Once a fan got hooked by ECW, they became a fan for life. We bred loyalty.

#### **Bubba Ray Dudley**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** Some of the memorable moments include the first evening I turned on the Sandman, and me and D-Von got together; the first time D-Von and I won the ECW Tag Team titles from the Eliminators (John Kronus & Perry Saturn); being on the first ECW pay-per-view, where we lost to the Eliminators; every time we wrestled in the ECW Arena, or at the Elks Lodge in New York City; and the first time we ever used flaming tables in Detroit, where I put Balls Mahoney through one. There were so many memorable moments in ECW, that I cannot put my finger on just one.

**ECW's Legacy:** ECW was an underground success because it was a legitimate revolution. It had a cult following,

it was anti-establishment, it was a middle finger to the wrestling world, and it was the birth of adult-oriented, in-your-face, sports-entertainment. When an ECW fan came to a show, they knew they were going to see something fresh, new, innovative, and as brutal as it gets. ECW helped bring this whole adult-oriented style of wrestling to the forefront by stepping up the physicality in the ring for more mature audiences, and allowing wrestling to go into places that it's never gone before.



#### **D-Von Dudley**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** It has to be my debut (April 13, 1996). I was nervous, scared as hell. I had been doing indies for about five years in front of maybe 10 people, if even that, and had never really been on TV. So they brought me into Queens, at the Lost Battalion Hall, and scheduled a match around me, to bring me in, with Bubba and all the rest of the Dudley clan. It went off great, I was beating the hell out of people with crutches, tables, you name it. I beat up a guy named J.T. Smith so bad that he had multiple concussions, and was out of action for like six months. I felt real bad about it,



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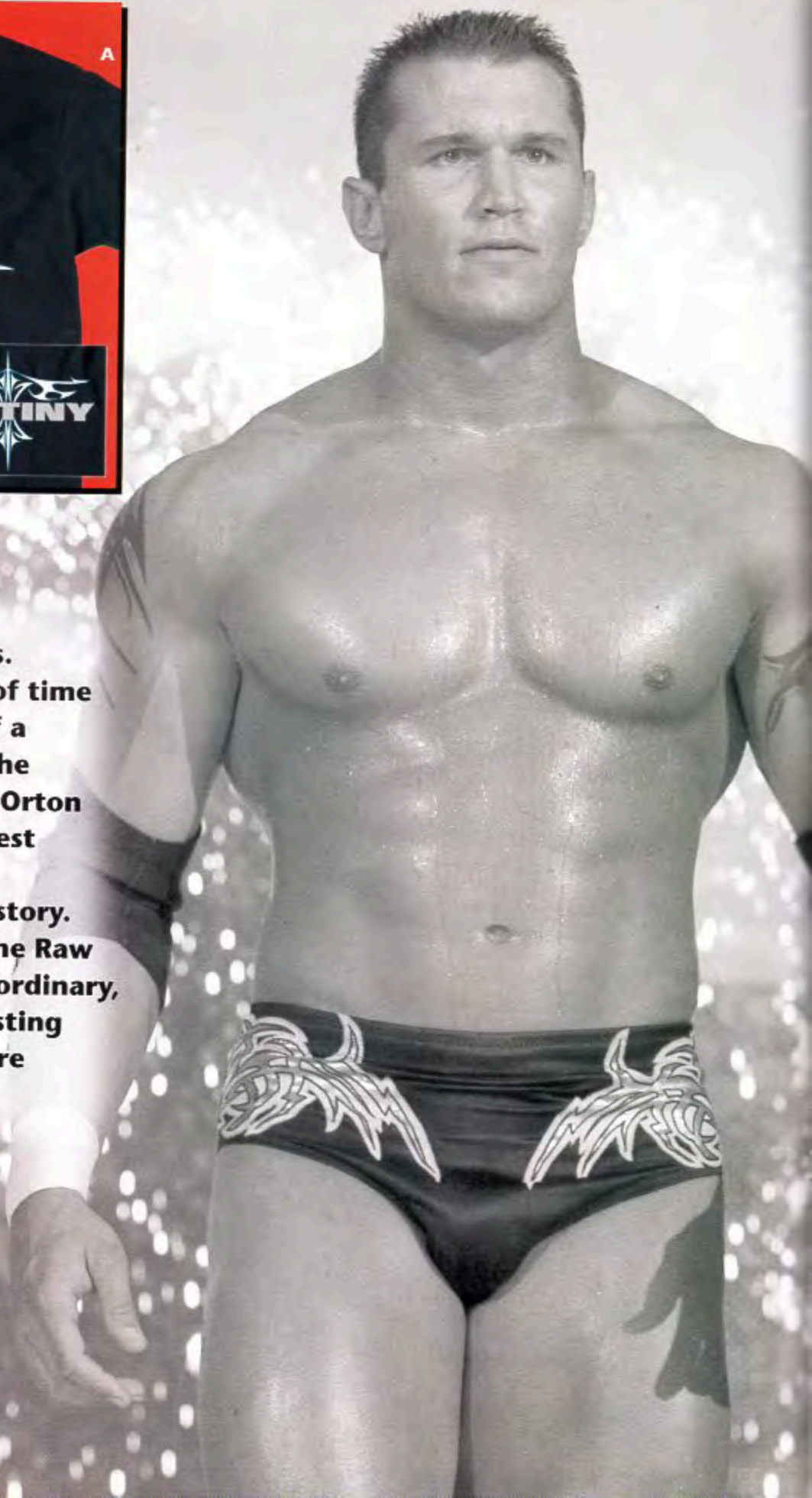
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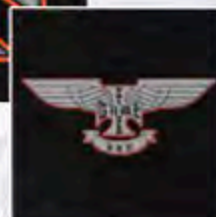
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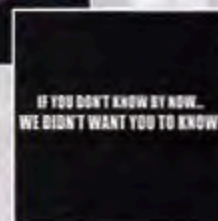
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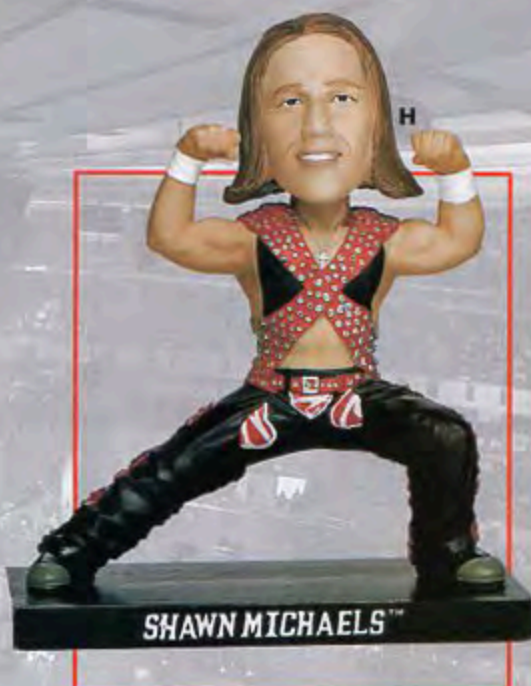
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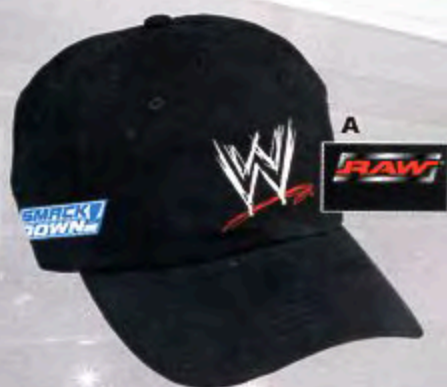


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and still do to this day, but it was an explosive night.

**ECW's Legacy:** ECW had really hardcore fans who wanted something different than family-oriented sports-entertainment. We were more violent, a little bit taboo, and really pushed the envelope. We crossed certain lines that you just don't cross because we didn't care. What also made us a success was the locker room. We were striving to make ECW the third-largest company at that time, and we were like a family unit. We stuck together, and busted our behinds every single night. There were times when we didn't have enough people in the seats to do a show, but we didn't care. We went out there and did what we had to do, and in doing that, we brought more people in, because those few fans went home and told their friends about what they saw, which brought others back the next time. I also credit the mind of Paul Heyman. He was so innovative with everything that he did, in terms of putting things together. He was just a genius who knew the game of pro wrestling, and knew how to get the people "ooh-ing" and "aah-ing." Like it or not, ECW made the major two companies stand at attention.

#### **Nunzio (competed as Little Guido)**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** One of my favorite matches has to be a time in Buffalo, when Super Crazy, Tajiri and I had a Three-Way Dance, which was pretty violent. And another of my favorite moments was back in '96, when J.T. Smith and I did a vignette at the Rocky statue in Philly. It was a start of a lot of great stuff in my career.

**ECW's Legacy:** I think what made ECW such a success was all of the hard work. In the beginning, not everybody was making a ton of money—we were making a little bit—but everybody was willing to work hard. Most of us didn't care about the money. We were just trying to become someone and to get something going. We all cared about the company, and at first, we were only on a small TV station in New York and New Jersey, but then we watched it grow, to Baltimore, and all these other

cities. And as we saw it grow, it just made us more excited, and got us to work even harder.

#### **Dean Malenko**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** That's easy, me vs. Eddie Guerrero, two-out-of-three falls, our last night there. We had a series—a week's worth—of 30-minute matches, when we found out that Eddie, myself, and Chris [Benoit] were all going to WCW. So, Paul Heyman gave us the luxury of going out there and entertaining the people. He dedicated the entire show to our final two-out-of-three falls match, and it was very memorable, not just for ECW, but for my career in general. It was an opportunity to wrestle one of my closest friends—a guy I've had some great matches against—and a chance to entertain the fans at the ECW Arena in Philadelphia, who were very respectful of both of our styles and what we brought there for the entire year. It was a great send-off.

**ECW's Legacy:** I think ECW was different from the other companies that were out there. Paul took a bunch of guys, and got the best of what they had. He took it, and magnified it. It would go from a wrestling match between Eddie Guerrero and myself to a hardcore match—it gave you everything from A to Z. It also had a different breed of fans—a cult following—and for them, ECW was almost like a religion.

#### **Tazz**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** My favorite moment was when Sabu and I faced off, after a year of not touching each other. We didn't have a match; I just kept calling him out. They shut off all the lights in the arena, and when the lights came back on, Sabu and I were standing face to face. That was an amazing moment, and I will never forget it.

**ECW's Legacy:** ECW really was underground. We didn't have the resources that WCW or WWE had then. There wasn't a lot of money floating around to have things like pyro, big fancy arenas, or tons and tons of talent. We were a small core group of guys with the same mission and the same vision as the owner of the company had. There was a great camaraderie there, and it

was a tight-knit family. We were a blue-collar promotion, made up of blue-collar guys. ECW was successful because it resembled what was going on out there, as far as the attitudes and such. We were the little engine that could—the underdog—and we loved it. I don't know if ECW changed the industry, but I think it redirected it, and had a humongous impact on it. ECW gave WCW and WWE a kick in the ass—I think it drove them. Hardcore was the disposition the company had. It was the attitude, and it was the work ethic. It had nothing to do with violence. That's the way I took it, and I was pretty successful there, so I should know. ECW was successful because of timing, the era that it happened in, and the people that were on the card. You can't redo that, the time was perfect, and it will never be redone. It was a mainstay for a long time, not the "bingo hall," or "bush leagues" that some people who've never been in ECW like to call it. I think its legacy will go down as something extremely positive, no pun intended.





### **Eddie Guerrero**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** My favorite moment was that last night in ECW, before we went to WCW. That night was just special—the fans, and the emotions that were in the arena—they appreciated it a lot. And although you had a lot of guys calling us sell-outs, and stuff like that, by the end of the night, the good outweighed the bad. It was just one of those moments where you knew a good thing was coming to an end. The fans didn't (turn) on us, they sent us out with love. They made it special. Not us, the fans.

**ECW's Legacy:** In my opinion, the fans felt that they had an investment in ECW—that was their mind-set. ECW was their baby, and as fans, they invested their emotions in it, so they didn't want it to end. They wanted to push it to the top. Everybody who went through there felt that, and they would probably say the same thing. ECW was a small company competing with two giant ones—WCW and WWE—and it stayed alive. That's what made it special. ECW hung in there, because it was different—it was hardcore, and it was extreme.

### **Lance Storm**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** My favorite memory was probably the standing ovation that Jerry Lynn and I received at *Anarchy Rulz '99* in Chicago. It was the opening match for the pay-per-view, and he and I had a series of near falls—I believe there were 12—and in the middle of the match, the entire crowd stood up, and gave us a standing ovation. I wound up coming out on top, and it was one of the coolest moments of my career.

**ECW's Legacy:** ECW did influence the hardcore wrestling style, but I think that it was taken out of context. There are a lot of people who don't realize how and why we did what we did. A lot of people look back and think it was this hardcore group, where everybody bled, and hit each other with stuff, but it was really so much more than that. There were deep-rooted rivalries that led to the hostility. We didn't just go out there and kill each other for no reason. Things just got so heated, and

so personal, that it wound up getting extreme. ECW was a family, not just in the back, but with the fans as well. I remember the very first ECW pay-per-view, and after it happened, we were all in the ring, and the crowd started a "Thank You" chant. So we were really one big family—crowd, wrestlers, office, everything. We had a great work ethic, and a relationship with the crowd.

### **Dawn Marie**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** I would probably have to say the time we were

in New Orleans, where it was Lance [Storm] and myself against Tammy Lynn Sytch (also known as Sunny) and Chris Candido. Everyone seems to think that Lance is this dry, unfunny type of person, but I know different. At the end the match, Chris Candido pulled his pants down—he had a G-string on. Then Tammy pulled her pants down—she had a G-string on. Then Lance did it—I think he might have had a G-string on, too. I was hysterically laughing.

**ECW's Legacy:** I think ECW was successful because it was a different





product. We weren't trying to compete with anyone else—we couldn't—and I think we knew that. Paul saw raw talent in people—that was his gift—and he knew our strengths and our weaknesses, enabling him to put us in situations where our strengths would shine, and our weaknesses would be hidden. He gave us the platform to run with the ball and be creative. We were also successful because everyone there had their own creativity, and their own identity, personality and contributions. On a physical sense, it probably wasn't the best thing for our future athletes—there are far more injuries now—because we raised the bar and made it a little more dangerous. Still, that doesn't mean it's necessarily a bad thing. ECW's legacy will be as the company who took all the misfits that nobody else wanted, and created stars.

#### Rhyno

**Favorite Match/Moment:** There are so many great moments that come to mind, like the time we were in Milwaukee, and I piledrove Sandman's wife through a table onto the concrete. After he helped her up, I Gored both of them through the table. Then, as he was tending to her, I stood over them and said "Happy Mother's Day, you f\*\*\*\*\*g b\*\*\*\*." But that was when I was really mean.

**ECW's Legacy:** People still chant "E-C-Dub, E-C-Dub" every time I go out there, so I guess it's still pretty popular. ECW was different, not everybody could see it, and sometimes when you can't see something, you want it even more. People would watch it, and they couldn't believe what they were seeing. Everybody had so much hunger, and while we may not have made a lot of money, we didn't care, because we were getting paid in other ways.

#### Lita (appeared as Angelica and Miss Congeniality)

**Favorite Match/Moment:** One was my first appearance on pay-per-view, when Danny Doring, who I was dating at the time, proposed to me with a condom, and the second was when Chris Chetti—Tazz's cousin, and an ultra-serious wrestler—became a Latin



Lover, and would dance to "Livin' La Vida Loca." I would become so mesmerized by his dancing that I would go dance with him.

**ECW's Legacy:** I think ECW was really consistent with their shows and followed through with things. They really made each star by taking people that you didn't know before, and making you really care about them. Also, they weren't afraid to push the envelope with anything. I think ECW will always be remembered as an organization that was way ahead of its time. Had it been financially managed better, I think it would still be giving us a run

for our money today.

#### Tajiri

**Favorite Match/Moment:** Every time [I was in the ring] was my favorite. I only wrestled for ECW the last two years of the company, but I still love ECW. I had great [tag-team] matches with Mikey Whipwreck, and I really enjoyed all of my matches with him.

#### Mick Foley (competed as Cactus Jack)

**Favorite Match/Moment:** That would definitely be my last match, with Mikey Whipwreck. At the time, I wasn't sure of what type of reaction I was going to receive, based on the fact that the fans knew full well that I was heading to WWE, which in their eyes was somewhat worse than committing treason against your country. I certainly would not have been surprised if I had gotten loudly booed, but instead the response they gave me was phenomenal.

**ECW's Legacy:** They found a niche in the wrestling world, had guys who were willing to work extremely hard, and had the mad scientist, Paul Heyman, at the helm. I certainly think that ECW helped bring along the WWE "Attitude" Era. As a matter of fact, I think ECW forced WWE to change their game.



In a battle of two of the most extreme competitors in ECW history, Cactus Jack lays into Terry Funk with a chairshot.



## Rey Mysterio

**Favorite Match/Moment:** My first match in ECW, which was against Psicosis. I had seen tapes prior to being there, and I was really amped up and excited to be part of ECW. When I got to the arena, I spoke to Paul—he told me to just go out there and have fun—and met everyone in the locker room. They were all so cool. Also, the crowd was real rowdy, because the hardcore fans knew Psicosis and I from watching us on Galavision from Mexico. We used tables, chairs, and even the balcony. It was the first time we did an extreme match like that.

**ECW's Legacy:** The two big companies had a limit on what you could display on TV, whereas ECW was extreme—they had women getting powerbombed, getting hit by chairs and bleeding, midgets getting hit, and stuff people just hadn't seen before.

## Tommy Dreamer

**Favorite Match/Moment:** That had to be when we went off the air following our first pay-per-view. The mood in the ECW Arena—with fans crying, wrestlers cheering and hugging, and everyone celebrating—was very emotional. It finally felt like all of our hard work was paying off—like we had won the World Series or the Super Bowl. It was just an emotional, great night.

**ECW's Legacy:** The fans made ECW an underground success. We were an alternative to what WCW and WWE were offering, and much like the Jerky Boys tapes and *South Park*, we were [a] word of mouth [phenomenon]. I also think it had a lot to do with the birth of the Internet, because fans began talking about the crazy things going on in Philadelphia in this company called Extreme Championship Wrestling. I feel ECW changed the business in almost every aspect. We catered to that 18-34 male demographic—not to children—and we never insulted our fans' intelligence. ECW's style changed the entire industry from soup to nuts. It was made up of a bunch of guys who went out there and worked their tails off night after night, and put their bodies on the line for the enjoyment of the fans.



## Jazz

**Favorite Match/Moment:** Heat-wave '99, when I had my first match [in ECW] against Jason Knight, that's one moment that I will never forget. I actually won the match, and because it was against a guy, I felt like it was an accomplishment in and of itself.

**ECW's Legacy:** We were successful not only because of the talent, but because of the fans. It was a different atmosphere that they brought to the show. It's hard to explain. I guess you'd have to have been there, but just working in front of those fans did something to you. It gave you a high that was unbelievable. ECW changed the business with its hardcore matches. They revolutionized the business in that aspect, and they will be remembered for being hardcore. It is a company that didn't have that much money, but we went out there and busted our asses every night for the fans. It's truly something







In one of the bloody wars ECW was known for, Terry Funk (right) captured the ECW Heavyweight title at ECW's first-ever pay-per-view, *Barely Legal*.

that I'm very, very grateful to have been a part of it. Paul Heyman gave me my first opportunity to prove myself in this business, so I will always have a great respect for both him and ECW.

#### **Rosey (competed as Matt E. Smalls)**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** There were a lot of good moments, because all of us worked really hard to make that company the best it could be. Just the whole experience of being there at that time (1998), I think that if I wound up coming in any earlier or any later, it wouldn't have been as good as when I came in. ECW was getting to its peak, and we just had a really good time being there.

**ECW's Legacy:** It changed the industry for a period, not forever. It definitely brought in some crazy maneuvers, but wrestling's still wrestling, and it's been the same since it started. There will be

some ripples in the water, but wrestling will always go back to wrestling. ECW had its moment in the spotlight, but when it comes down to it, it is what it is—wrestling.

#### **Al Snow**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** Definitely the [*Living Dangerously '98*] pay-per-view I headlined in Asbury Park, New Jersey, where I was a special surprise partner for Lance Storm, who was taking on "The Franchise" Shane Douglas and Chris Candido. There were probably 4,000 to 5,000 foam heads out in the crowd, so without a doubt, that was my absolute favorite moment.

**ECW's Legacy:** It was an underground movement. Paul E. was smart, because he saw people reacting to seeing things that were out of the norm, rebellious, or f\*\*\*ing the system. So he created this almost cult-like following by rebelling against the system, by making things a little wilder, a little crazier, and a little more extreme. Nowadays, lots of people use the word extreme to describe things from a marketing standpoint, but it all started with Paul saying 'this is Extreme Championship Wrestling,' and actually taking it to the extreme. It was also a proving ground. ECW was a place where guys like myself, Benoit, Guerrero, Malenko, Shane Douglas, and Chris Candido—I could go down the list—who had never really gotten a true break, were given the ball and ran with it. Now, that's either because Paul had no choice, or because he really saw something in us—I don't know. It was a place where he could develop and create stars that might not have otherwise gotten to the national stage, and get them the exposure that allowed them to go on to WCW and WWE. That will probably be one of its biggest legacies.

#### **Chris Benoit**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** It may sound kind of sick, but it would have to be the match where I broke Sabu's neck, and therefore became known as the Crippler. I was actually terrified when it happened, but looking back on it now, it was a really big moment in my career. It kind of kick-started it, and gave me a lot of notoriety, in terms of exposure.



Sabu typified ECW's "extreme" style.

**ECW's Legacy:** I think ECW opened up a lot of different doors, because its athletes were doing such crazy stuff—like hardcore matches and such. Paul set a standard in that he didn't have a whole lot to work with, but he made the best with what he had. It seemed like every time you turned your head, another name left for one of the two big companies, but he kept trekking along, making new stars. Also, I think that ECW was so unorthodox at the time, and so far out in left field, that they had a cult following that was different than anything else on the market. That's what made ECW special.

#### **Chris Jericho**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** It was a four-way match for the ECW TV title—which I held—between myself, Pit Bull II—who is now deceased, God rest his soul—Shane Douglas and 2 Cold Scorpio.



**ECW's Legacy:** It was a very rebellious type of company with a pioneering attitude, where they put less emphasis on the rules and more emphasis on shock value and true-blue wrestling. Guys like Malenko, Benoit, Guerrero, Mysterio and Jericho all had their first chances in ECW, where they had maybe been deemed too small for other mainstream promotions. You could never understand ECW unless you were actually there. I think Jim Ross put it best when he said, "People drank Heyman's Kool-Aid," because it was a cult-like atmosphere. If you worked for ECW, you wanted to live, breathe, fight and whip ass for ECW. It was a maverick promotion, kind of on its own, with an "us-against-them" mentality, and that really caught on. And no matter how many people attended the shows, those people believed that they were part of something special, something they couldn't be a part of if they watched the big two (WWE and WCW). It was like an exclusive club that only they knew about. When ECW went national, and started doing pay-per-views, I think it kind of hurt it, because it took that away.

**Simon Dean (competed as Nova)**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** *November to Remember 2000* at the Odeum in Chicago, when I wrestled my former tag-team partner, Chris Chetti, in a "Loser Leaves ECW" match. I beat him, forced him to leave, and the crowd got lit up. It was something I'll never forget.

**ECW's Legacy:** ECW was successful because of the fans. It had a cult following, and it reminded me of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The people that came to the matches were more involved than anything else I've ever seen, and they were the ones that let you know if you did good, or if you screwed up. A lot of those people saw ECW come up from nothing—when it was being run in a bingo hall—and knew that the fans were very instrumental in it becoming what it was. They kind of saw it as their kid, and felt like they helped bring it up. It was both good and bad. Good in that



The Blue World Order (BWO) was one of many extreme factions.

it brought about a lot of cutting-edge ideas, and things people hadn't seen before—things that went against better taste. People saw the rougher edge of wrestling, and they got into it. On the other side, ECW raised the bar as far as in-ring matches went, and a lot of my friends got hurt, and even I did. That's probably the only negative.

**Steven Richards**

**Favorite Match/Moment:** My favorite moment would probably be the first time that ECW had a pay-per-view, and that was *Barely Legal* [in 1997]. I was blessed enough to be in the main event with Terry Funk and the Sandman to decide who would become the No. 1 contender for the ECW World title, and get to face Raven



later in the night for the title. It wound up being Terry Funk, and he went on to win the title, so that was probably the milestone match for not only me, but also for ECW.

**ECW's Legacy:** ECW just offered something completely different from WCW and WWE. It was sort of like an underground movement; like an independent filmmaker competing against MGM, Fox and Warner Bros. Maybe ECW didn't have the other two promotions' fan bases, but its fans were the most loyal fans that I've ever seen. To me, ECW was more than just a rebellious promotion; it was more of an underground movement. Even today, when someone gets put through a table, or beaten with a kendo stick, you hear people chant "ECW, ECW." ECW left an impression on people that I don't think will ever go away. ■

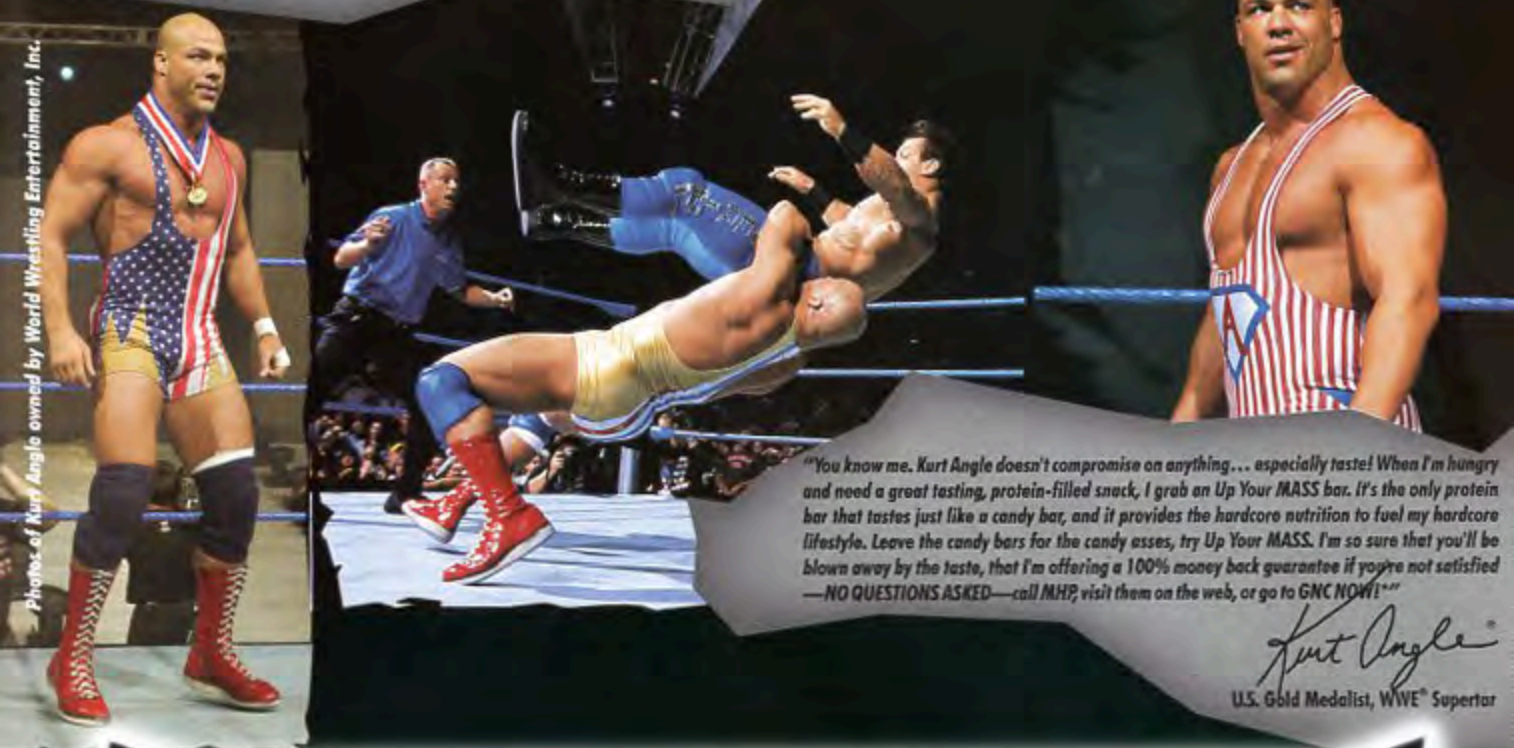




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Paul Heyman (far right) was the creative visionary behind the renegade group.

## ECW 1993-2001: PAUL HEYMAN REMEMBERS

In the summer of 1993, Eddie Gilbert was wrestling and working backstage at what was then Eastern Championship Wrestling, and asked Paul Heyman—a lifetime fan, and a wrestling manager of some repute—to help out. Heyman agreed, and he began doing business behind the scenes in the south Philadelphia bingo hall that doubled as the group's arena. Soon, Eastern Championship Wrestling became Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW), the embodiment of Heyman's long-held wrestling fantasies.

His first notable contribution to ECW was the Public Enemy, a tag team that came to the ring to hip-hop music, went into the crowd, and got everybody to rock back and forth, swinging their arms from side to side. It doesn't

sound all that radical now, but, in 1993, it was groundbreaking. The brash New Yorker then brought in "suicidal, homicidal, genocidal, death-defying" Sabu; the "Human Suplex Machine," Tazz; the "Innovator of Violence," Tommy Dreamer; and the cigarette-puffing, beer-swilling Sandman.

"We filtered in all these guys who made an impact in this little bingo hall," Heyman says. "After a while, we weren't looking for wrestlers anymore. People wanted to work for us."

All three Dudleys were launched in ECW, along with half-siblings like Big Dick Dudley, Sign Guy Dudley and Dances With Dudley. Shane Douglas, a former medical student who'd appeared in WWE and WCW, became "The Franchise." Terry Funk, the former

NWA World Champion, evolved into a demented, middle-aged man and fit right in.

Heyman enjoyed defying the conventions of wrestling. The show opened to the accompaniment of loud punk music. There were upside-down camera angles. The relaxed rulebook meant no count-outs or disqualifications.

"Those who were with us were all the way with us," Heyman says. "Because we had the work ethic, we gave our fans the bang for their buck, and we gave a damn about *satisfying* the audience."

To longtime fans hungering for something different, ECW was revolutionary. The Internet was in its infancy, and ECW gossip was a big part of the burgeoning technology. As for wrestlers not affiliated with either WWE or WCW, "they came





to us to either make or revitalize their careers," Heyman says.

"Eddie Guerrero and Chris Benoit were future WWE Champions, but ECW really gave them a place to show off their talent," he says. "When Steve Austin was fired by WCW, he didn't have a reputation within the industry as anything but a damn solid wrestler. In ECW, he got a chance."

Furious over his dismissal, Austin went on ECW TV, donned a black wig, and viciously mimicked Eric Bischoff, who had fired the soon-to-be Texas Rattlesnake from WCW via overnight courier.

"Finally," Heyman says, "we got to see his sense of humor, sarcastic intensity and violent tendencies. It was just daring television, and people learned just how biting Steve Austin could be."

And he wasn't the only one. Scott Levy had been Johnny Polo, Johnny Flamingo and Scotty the Body in other promotions. In ECW, he bared his troubled soul as The Raven. Mick Foley, according to Heyman, was "a whole different level of twisted genius. Mick Foley had been pigeonholed in his career into

the hardcore wrestling style. He wrestled on thumbtacks and got tangled in barbed wire. But there's so much more to Mick. And when we allowed him to get on the microphone and express himself, you saw how brilliant he really was."

Despite their personal rivalries, ECW's wrestlers—along with their infatuated legions of supporters—felt a type of kinship to one another, rooted in the unexpected nature of the company's success.

"We weren't supposed to be there," Heyman says. "All the traditional wrestling territories were dying. It was WWE and WCW. We had no resources, no money, rudimentary editing equipment and a bingo hall with a leaky roof. The only way for us to get attention was to demand it. We had to give the finger to the entire world."

With so much visibility, though, ECW's more affluent rivals began signing away its stars. "Every time somebody left," Heyman says, "we brought in a new style. When we lost Benoit, Malenko and Eddie Guerrero, we brought in Rey Mysterio, Juventud Guerrera and Psicosis. When we lost them, we brought in Tajiri and Super

Crazy. When we lost the Dudley Boyz, we had the Impact Players. It was never about the main event, it was about the entire ECW experience."

Nonetheless, the demand for ECW to tour and stage pay-per-view events generated expenses that nobody had envisioned in advance. A national television contract and licensing deals helped for a while. At one stage, an infusion of money even came from WWE, which had blended some ECW elements into its "Attitude" era.

"Even then," Heyman says, "we were spending so much just to live up to our contractual obligations."

In 2001, shortly after WWE purchased floundering WCW, ECW officially folded.

"We changed the face of the industry," Heyman says. "For seven years, we were a revolutionary, counter-culture movement that spawned an audience that, to this day, reminisces fondly about a product we had a blast presenting. Everyone else had money, muscle and mouthpiece. We had bravado and bull\*\*\*\*."

— Keith Elliot Greenberg





By Keith Elliot Greenberg





# “CALL ME BOSS... OR ELSE”

SPIKE'S  
ULTIMATUM  
TO HIS  
BROTHERS:

**F**ans of ECW might recall that Bubba Ray Dudley used to be a different type of person. He'd take the microphone and begin stuttering at the audience. For reasons only he understood, he'd break into buffoonish dance moves. His opponents acknowledged his ability to inflict pain. But—according to his brother, D'Von—he wasn't being taken seriously.

It was time for a change, D'Von concluded. And the way to make Bubba Ray transform himself was simple: Use the kind of tough love that only a Dudley could inflict.

"Bubba looked like a fool out there," D'Von says, with agitation rising in his voice. "It had to stop. We couldn't have any more stuttering, any more catering to the fans. It wasn't getting him anywhere, and it wasn't getting us anywhere."

So, every time Bubba Ray opened his mouth and began to blubber out a greeting to the crowd, D'Von would smack him in the mouth.

"For six months, I beat him up," D'Von says. "And I did it because he needed it. It was a good thing for Bubba,

and it was a good thing for the team."

In fact, D'Von adds, had he been more tender and understanding, the Dudleys may have never exhibited the edge that enticed WWE officials to sign them in the first place. Instead of being considered the most accomplished team in WWE history, they'd be remembered as an entertaining twosome who left the business when ECW vanished from the sports-entertainment landscape.

Now, Spike—the so-called runt of the Dudley litter—finds himself on a similar mission. After years at the top, Spike believes, Bubba Ray & D'Von became complacent and began to take their purpose on *SmackDown!* too lightly.

It would require a diminutive disciplinarian to turn them around.

"They needed a kick in the butt," Spike says. "They've been beating up people for so long, they started to get a little too comfortable. It was time to remind them just who we are."

So now, Spike is the one who leads Bubba Ray & D'Von to the ring, ordering them to apply a little extra pressure when clamping down on a hammerlock, or hit an opponent cowering in the





corner with a lot more force. And when Bubba Ray & D'Von address him, Spike demands that his siblings refer use the deferential term, "The Boss."

"It's the natural order of things," Spike says. "I may be the littlest brother, but I'm also the eldest. People don't realize that. Before they began smacking me around, I was the one who kicked their asses. And they know it. That's why I'm the leader."

Amazingly, both Bubba Ray &



D'Von—men who've traditionally refused to adhere to authority—have been obediently following Spike's commands.

"He's running the show," D'Von says.

Here's Bubba Ray's take on the family dynamic: "We beat the crap out of each other in the Dudleys. And we respect Spike as an equal part of the family."

This has enabled Spike to bully Bubba Ray in front of fans, and, in one case, kick D'Von in the groin when the new head of the family was disappointed with his sibling's performance.

"He's giving us a wakeup call," Bubba Ray says, describing the sibling vio-

lence. "The people have always loved Spike, but they didn't know him the way we do. No one takes more of a hellacious beating than our brother. And after having his ass handed to him a few too many times, he's become a vicious little bastard."

Indeed, this is quite a dramatic shift from the endearing Spike Dudley fans remember. In the beginning, he seemed rather simple-minded, and, quite frankly, incapable of anything this calculated. On *SmackDown!*, as well as previously on *Raw*, he had been a lovable, scrappy competitor who fans found it very easy to sympathize with and get behind.





Yet, that all changed in the summer, when Spike, for the first time, began exhibiting traits that had often been seen in other Dudleys, but never in him. Cheating to win, verbally berating opponents, even slapping longtime friend and ally Scotty 2 Hotty—these were not the actions of a gentle, mild-mannered individual. These were the actions of a bitter, twisted man.

Apparently having had enough of being pushed around by just about everyone, Spike took it upon himself to lash back at the world. For Spike—who won the WWE Cruiserweight title in July with the assistance of his brothers—the experience has been both cleansing and rewarding.

"I'm returning to my roots," he says. "I'm a Dudley. I tried to act independent and please other people. But playing that game got me nowhere. What works for me now is being brutal, and being with my family."

Today, the Dudleys are inseparable. Spike watches his brothers from ringside, as they pursue yet another WWE Tag Team Championship. And Bubba Ray & D'Von invariably position themselves in their sibling's corner, ready to jump into his clashes.

In fact, D'Von has begun to compare the re-energized unit to the Freebirds, the trio of Michael "P.S." Hayes, Terry "Bam Bam" Gordy and Buddy Roberts—men unified by a blood pact to stick together and batter anyone who threat-



ened a single member of the group. In the early 1980s, the Freebirds established themselves as true legends in the industry. But now, under Spike's authority, the Dudleys could well surpass them.

"Spike was the piece of the puzzle that we were missing," D'Von says.

Not everyone shares his enthusiasm. Opponents have compared the Dudleys to a street gang—effective when stomping an outnumbered opponent, but too reliant on one another to succeed without backup. And while Bubba Ray & D'Von hail Spike as a visionary, adversaries are more likely to describe him as a punk with a Napoleon complex.

"That's an unfair analysis," Spike says. "A guy with a Napoleon complex thinks he's badder than he actually is. I know how dangerous I am, and how

dangerous the Dudleys can be. And the way we humiliate our opponents week after week confirms it."

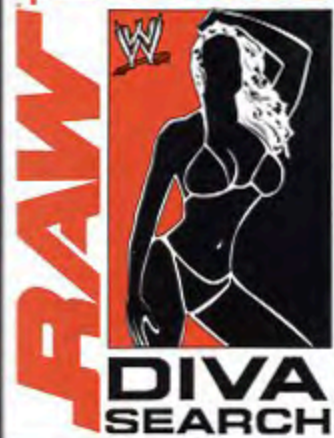
Judging by the effect he's had on the 18-time tag team champions, it's hard to argue with the little man. He's not only motivated them to renewed aggression, but he's also reinvigorated his own career, all by embracing the darker side of his personality, which—if you believe his brothers—was really there all along.

Whether that's true or not, it's clear that he's changed the way he wishes to be perceived by fans, so those who found space in their hearts for him before had better put that space up for rent. Spike Dudley has quickly gone from an underdog to an underboss, and heaven help those who try to undermine his authority. ■





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# SURVIVO

By Michael Dworkis

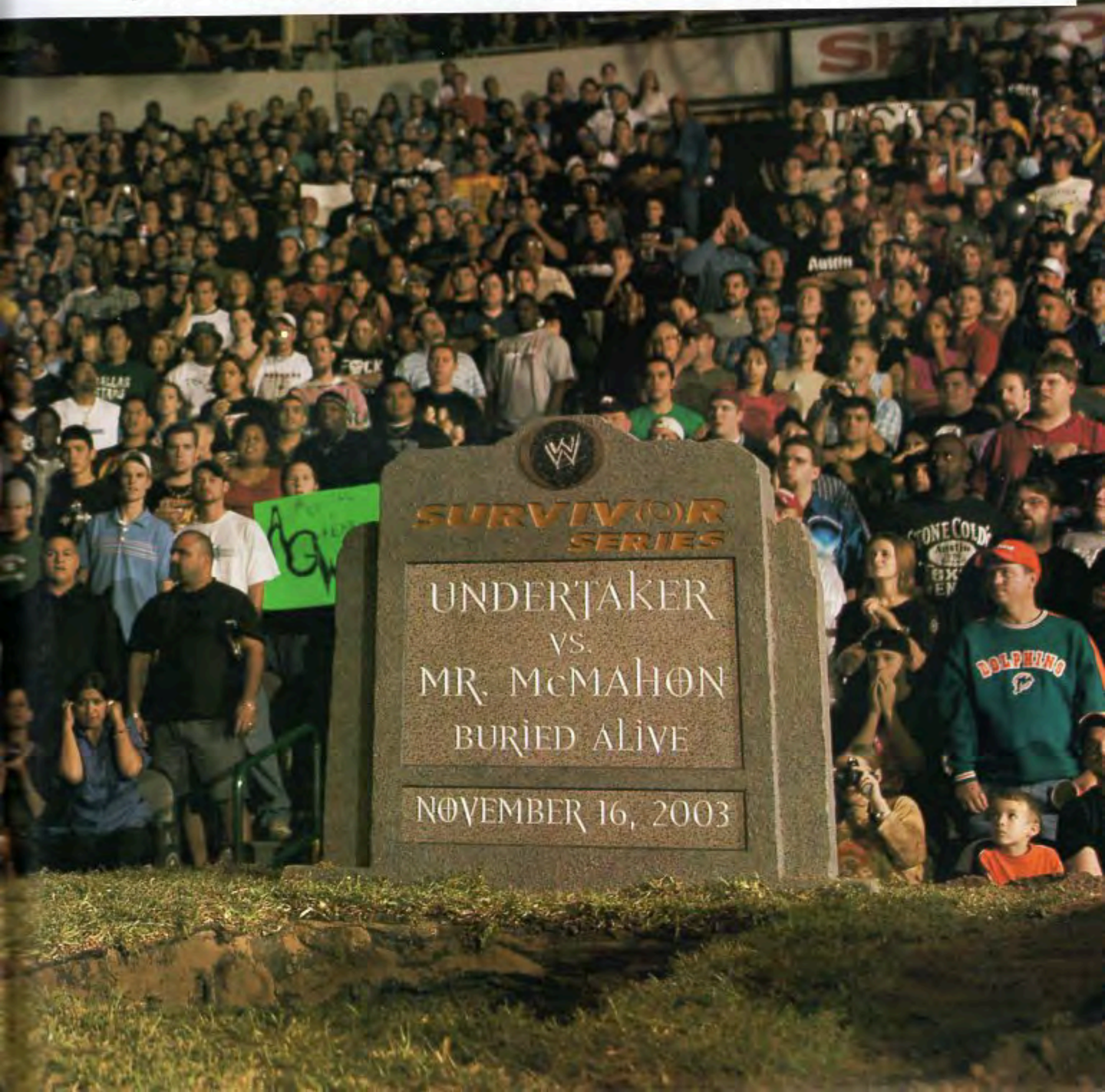


Kane helps Vince McMahon lay Undertaker to rest in last year's Buried Alive Match.



# R SERIES:

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*Survivor Series* is one of WWE's most enduring pay-per-view traditions, surpassed in longevity only by *WrestleMania*. It all began on November 26, 1987, at the Richfield Coliseum in Richfield, Ohio.

Originally dubbed "the Thanksgiving Tradition," *Survivor Series* moved to Thanksgiving Eve in 1991, where it continued for four more years until

the event gained a more conventional Sunday night time slot.

The birth of *Survivor Series* brought with it several memorable moments. The first edition featured a 20-man elimination match, which pitted the British Bulldogs, the Young Stallions, Strike Force, the Killer Bees & the Rougeau Brothers against the Hart Foundation, the New Dream Team, Demolition, the Bolsheviks & the Islanders. A women's elimination match that included the Fabulous Moolah was also on the card. In the main event, the titanic team of Andre the Giant, One Man Gang, King Kong Bundy, Butch Reed & Rick Rude defeated WWE Champion Hulk Hogan, Bam Bam Bigelow, Paul Orndorff, Don Muraco & Ken Patera.

The 1989 edition featured a new format: Ten teams of four were created, each with a captain. In 1990, *Survivor*

*Series* evolved again. This time, the remaining members of each surviving team would be grouped together for one final elimination match. In addition, the 1990 *Survivor Series* will always be remembered for the debut of a man who has been a mainstay in WWE ever since: Undertaker.

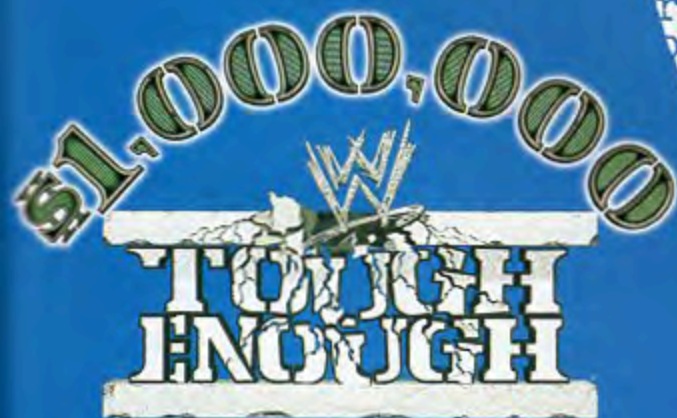
One year later, Undertaker would make history by defeating Hulk Hogan for the WWE Championship in the first title match ever held at *Survivor Series*.

In 1992, *Survivor Series* returned to its birthplace, the Richfield Coliseum—the only arena to host the event three times. The mega-card broke from its elimination match format for the first time. The major matchups of the night saw Randy Savage & Mr. Perfect defeat Ric Flair & Razor Ramon by disqualification, Undertaker defeat Kamala in WWE's first-ever Casket Match, and Bret



At the first *Survivor Series*, WWE Champion Hulk Hogan (far right) rallied (left to right) Don Muraco, Ken Patera, Paul Orndorff & Bam Bam Bigelow to his side.





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Hart retain the WWE Championship with a victory over Shawn Michaels.

*Survivor Series* moved to Sunday nights in 1995. In a twist, Superstars that were adored and abhorred by fans were joined together on the same teams. Bret Hart ended Diesel's one-year reign as WWE Champion. Also, it was first time since 1987 that an elimination match consisting solely of women took place.

The 10th edition of *Survivor Series* was held at Madison Square Garden in 1996. It was there that The Rock made an unforgettable first impression as sole survivor in his WWE debut match. It was a time of great change, as evidenced by the New York fans rooting for the previously hated Stone Cold Steve Austin in his effort against perennial favorite Bret "Hit Man" Hart, planting the seeds for the "Attitude Era."

**Above: Controversy in Montreal (1997); Near right: The Rock debuts at MSG ('96); Far right: Kurt Angle debuts against Shawn Stasiak ('99).**

The 1997 *Survivor Series* will always be remembered for the "Montreal Incident" involving Bret Hart and Vince McMahon. In what will forever be considered one of the sport's most controversial matches, McMahon ordered referee Earl Hebner to award the victory





and the WWE Championship to Shawn Michaels, despite Hart's claim he never submitted to HBK's Sharpshooter. Never before had a single match so rocked the sports-entertainment world. It was a bold example of the new, aggressive, edgy side of WWE.

The following year, a one-night tournament was held for the vacant WWE Championship, which saw The Rock emerge with the title for the first time in his career. The man he defeated in the finals was none other than Mankind—a.k.a. Mick Foley—who would later become his tag-team partner in the vaunted Rock 'n' Sock Connection.

With the approaching end of the 20th century in 1999 came the beginning of a stellar career for Kurt Angle, who defeated Shawn Stasiak in his debut match. Angle was the latest in a series of the game's major Superstars to have made their first WWE appearance at *Survivor Series*.

*Survivor Series 2000* set the tone for years to come. New faces would seize the opportunity to quickly rise to stardom. The perfect example was Angle's successful defense of his WWE Championship against Undertaker. It was the first time someone had retained the championship at a *Survivor Series* since 1992.





The 1990 *Survivor Series* featured the first appearance of Undertaker. Ted DiBiase enlisted him as part of his team, to take on the team led by Dusty Rhodes (above).

Little did anyone know that the future of WWE itself would be decided one year later in Greensboro, North Carolina, when the invading WCW-ECW Alliance tried to put WWE out of business in a winner-take-all match in 2001. Team WWE prevailed as Kurt Angle made an impact for the third consecutive *Survivor Series*, turning on Alliance figurehead Stone Cold Steve Austin, which allowed WWE to end the Alliance.

Continuing the tradition of *Survivor Series* firsts, Eric Bischoff unveiled a never-before-seen match in 2002: The Elimination Chamber. Two men would

start, and every five minutes a new man would enter. Shawn Michaels outlasted Rob Van Dam, Booker T, Kane, Chris Jericho and Triple H to win the World Heavyweight Championship.

Last year's *Survivor Series* is best described as epic. John Cena's career continued its rapid ascent as he and Chris Benoit were the sole survivors from Team Angle in its victory over Team Lesnar in *SmackDown!*'s elimination match.

The rivalry between *Raw* co-general managers Bischoff and Austin came to a head. Each man assembled a team of five, with the stipulation that the

manager of the losing team would step down. Also, with assistance from Kane, Vince McMahon buried Undertaker alive, seemingly bringing an end to the Deadman's career. However, it turned out to be the beginning of Undertaker's rebirth.

If previous years are any indication, the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of *Survivor Series*, to be held on November 14, in Cleveland, Ohio, will undoubtedly be a remarkable event. Many look at *Survivor Series* as a harbinger of unpredictable events which helps close out the year in sports-entertainment, and sets the stage for the next one. Judging by the large number of talented Superstars on *Raw* and *SmackDown!*, the action will only intensify with each passing year. ■



# Big Man With A Big Heart

Ray Traylor  
1963-2004

He may have been the mean and nasty Big Boss Man on television, but away from the ring, Ray Traylor was anything but. A man loved and admired by all, his passing on September 23, 2004 has

sent ripples of sadness throughout the sports-entertainment business.

"As mean as he was inside the ring, he was that sweet outside the ring," said WWE official and sports-entertainment legend Michael "P.S." Hayes. "The guy had a great heart. He gave back to his local community quite a bit. I'd like to send my condolences to his wife and children. The wrestling world is a lot sadder, and definitely missing somebody without Big Boss Man around."

Of all the things he accomplished during his career, his extensive charity work was what he was most proud of. Always determined to put his notoriety to good use, Traylor was constantly

involved in helping others. He assisted in the building of playgrounds and nature trails, and even helped organize a vigil in his town of Dallas, Georgia to help raise money for the victims of 9/11. Above all, what gave him the most satisfaction was visiting children.

"Mainly I believe that taking time out and saying hello to the kids is the biggest part," he told us in an interview for the April 2002 issue of *Raw Magazine*. "It really means a lot when you just shake their hands, look them in the eye and say, 'Hello.' It's just so important to let them know that there are people out there who really care."

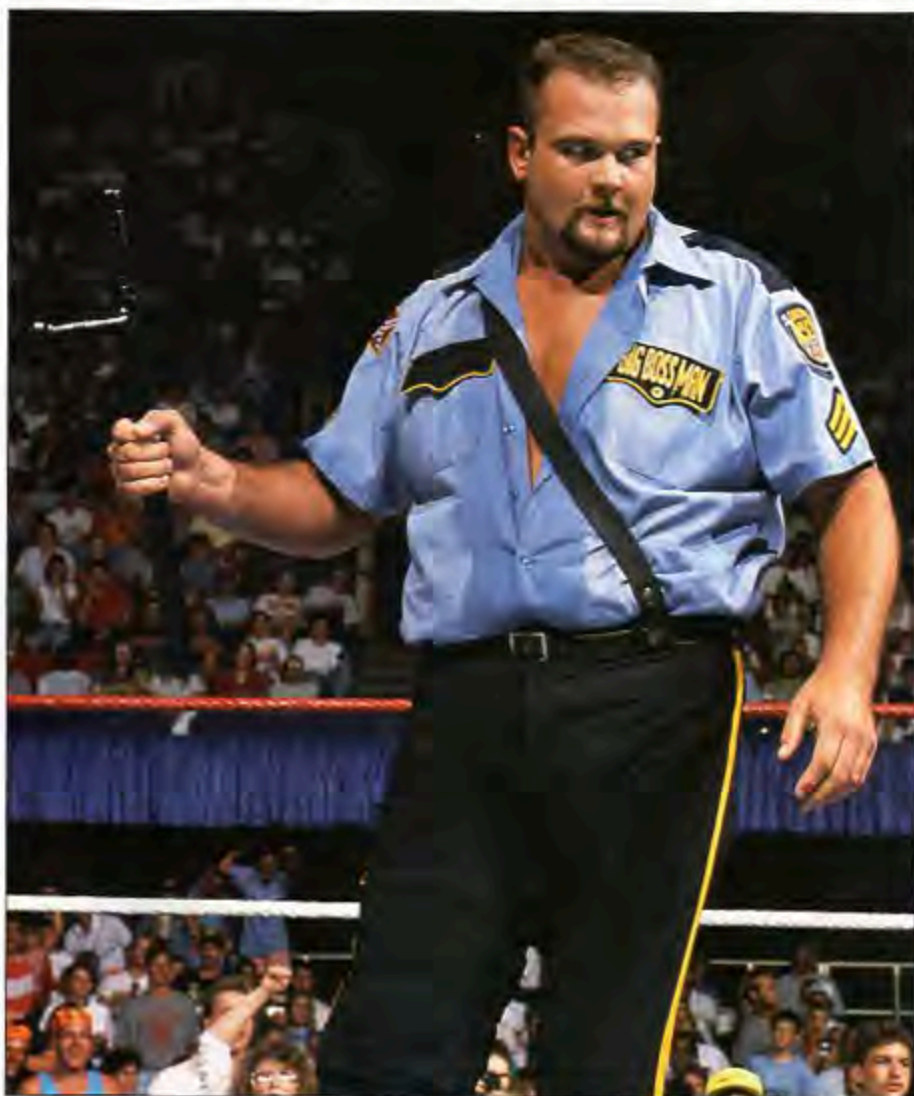
Aside from his work away from the ring, Ray Traylor will always be known to generations of fans as the nightstick-twirling Big Boss Man, who saw to it that all his opponents served "hard time." The persona drew from Traylor's actual job before he got into the sport.

Working as a prison guard in Cobb County, Georgia in 1984, he caught the attention of promoters in the Mid-Atlantic region of the NWA. The following year, he made his pro debut.

"I met Ray back in the mid-'80s," remembered Hayes, who was a part of the Fabulous Freebirds tag team at the time. "Back then, he was going by the name Big Bubba Rogers, and he was the bodyguard for Jim Cornette. He picked up the business very quickly. He was amazingly quick in the ring for a man his size. I would have no trouble at all saying he was one of the greatest big men of all time."

The burly Big Bubba was at manager Cornette's side at all times, protecting him and his charges, such as the Midnight Express. During this period, however, he wasn't given any chances to exhibit his unique gift of gab. That would come later.

After gaining sufficient experience in the NWA, Traylor made the big jump to WWE in the fall of 1988, and became



**Big Boss Man was a force in the WWE during the late '80s, when he had fierce battles with Hollywood Hogan (right).**



**By Brian Solomon**

Additional Reporting By Anthony Call







the Big Boss Man. Initially, he was a bad guy under the management of Slick, and a tag team partner of Akeem. Together, they comprised the Twin Towers, a mammoth tandem which took on the Rockers at *WrestleMania V*. This may have been the most high-profile period of Traylor's career, in which he engaged in lengthy rivalries with WWE Champions Randy Savage and Hollywood Hogan. Big Boss Man's 1989 match with Hogan at Madison Square Garden is an MSG highlight, and a matchup pitting the Twin Towers against Hogan & Savage—nationally televised in prime time—led directly to the breakup of Hogan's and Macho Man's "Mega-Power" alliance.

Eventually, his boisterous charisma and take-no-crap attitude gained such popularity with fans that he became one of WWE's most beloved competitors. His wars during the early '90s with both Ravishing Rick Rude and the Mountie are fondly remembered. The match he had with the Mountie at *SummerSlam '91*—in which the French-Canadian loudmouth had to spend the

**Traylor's skills in the ring were impressive, here battling Haku (left) and the Mountie (above).**





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**Eventually, Big Boss Man swore off his rulebreaking ways and protected law and order in WWE against Superstars such as "Million Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase (above).**



night in a New York slammer as a result of losing to Boss Man—was a classic moment. Many fans will also remember his feud with the menacing Nailz, who claimed to have once been an inmate in Boss Man's prison.

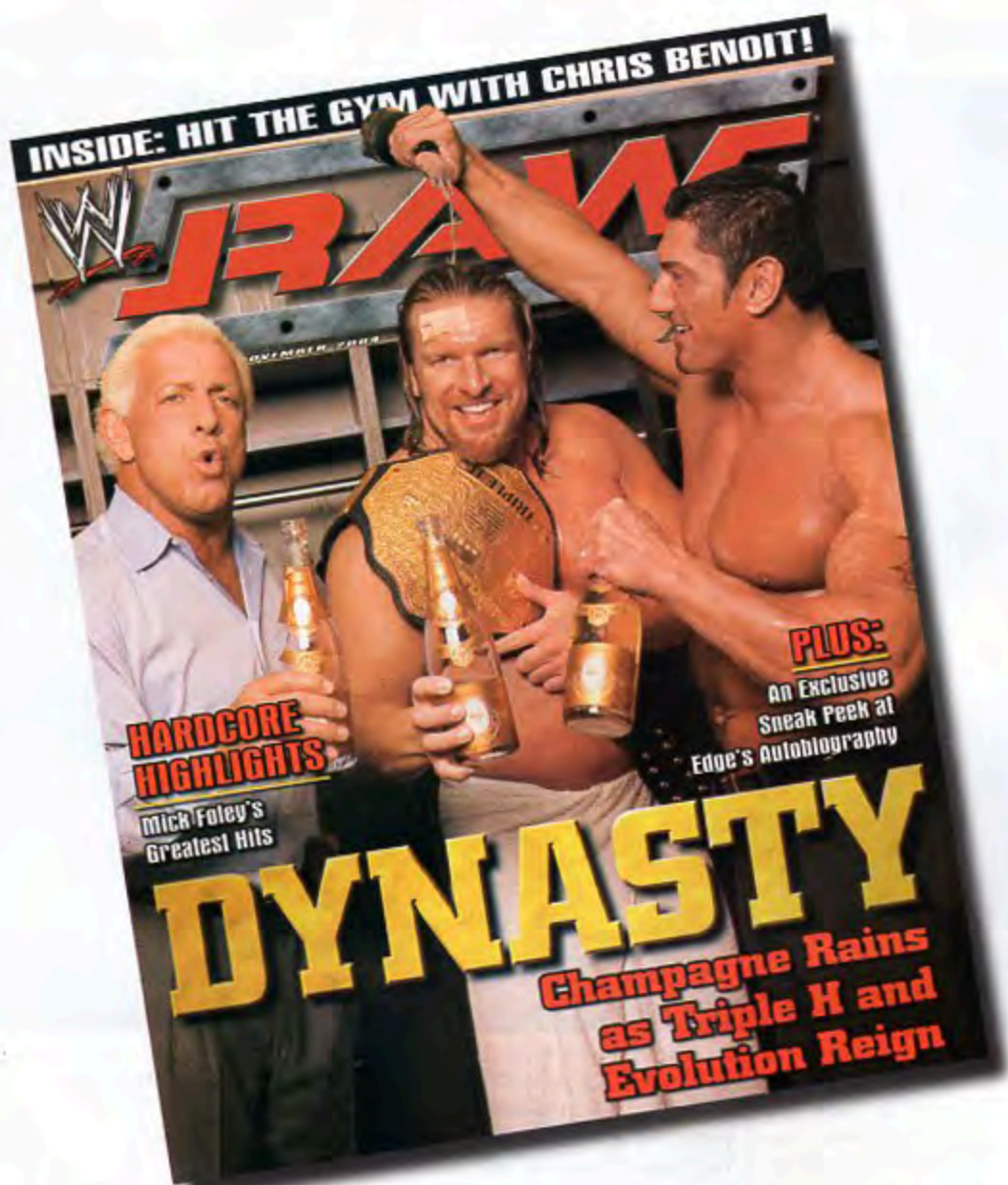
For nearly half a decade, the Big Boss Man was one of the premier Superstars on the WWE roster, recognized throughout the world. In 1993, he departed WWE and spent some time on the independent circuit before he moved to the former WCW. Although he spent several years there, Traylor had difficulty recapturing the glory of his

WWE years. Unable to call himself Big Boss Man, he ran through a series of in-ring personas, from The Boss, to the old Big Bubba, to the Guardian Angel, and even just plain ol' Ray Traylor.

But it wasn't quite the same. The majority of fans had grown to love and accept him as the Big Boss Man, and even his fellow grapplers only referred to him as "Boss Man," despite his various name changes. The talent was still there, but people wanted the Big Boss Man back.

Finally, in late 1998, he came back home. As part of Mr. McMahon's





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Love him or hate him—Triple H is the man once again. Relive the night he won the gold from Randy, and learn why he just may be the greatest of all time. It's all in this month's issue of *Raw Magazine*.

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"Corporation," the Big Boss Man once again became a force to be reckoned with, this time abandoning his blue prison guard outfit for an all-black SWAT-team uniform. He faced Undertaker in a Hell in a Cell match at *WrestleMania XV*, and challenged Big Show for the WWE

Championship at *Armageddon '99*—his first WWE Championship match in 10 years. He also enjoyed a reign as World Tag Team Champion with Ken Shamrock in 1998, and won the now-defunct Hardcore title four times in '98 and '99.

By 2001, a nagging knee injury put him on the sidelines, and he remained in semi-retirement. In between the occasional return to TV, he would spend time imparting his wealth of knowledge and experience to both current WWE Superstars as well as young trainees. Eventually, he parted ways with WWE for good and dedicated himself more than ever to his charitable activities.

**While Traylor truly had a passion for the sports-entertainment industry, it was his family (left) that was his all-encompassing inspiration.**



He was also finally able to spend the time he had always wanted to spend at home with his family. Ray Traylor is survived by his wife Angela, and two daughters, 11-year-old Megan and 9-year-old Lacy. They meant everything to him, and were his inspiration through all those years spent on the road earning a living as one of WWE's most well-known Superstars.

"I dedicate my whole career to her," Ray said of his wife in 2002. "Without her understanding and support, I wouldn't be anybody. We've been together since high school—longer than I've been in the wrestling business—and there's no way I could have done what I have in this industry or been a part of it if it wasn't for her. She lived through all the times I was on the road for 300 days a year. She ranks above everything else, because without family, you're nothing." ■



# FLASHBACK PHOTO

Ray "Big Boss Man" Traylor  
1963-2004







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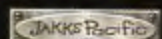
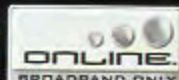


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